

# PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the New York Post Office, November 7, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

No. 519.

NEW YORK, MAY 13, 1908.

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## A FIREMAN AT SIXTEEN; OR, THROUGH FLAME AND SMOKE.

By EX FIRE CHIEF WARDEN.



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## A FIREMAN AT SIXTEEN

OR,

## Through Flame and Smoke

By EX-FIRE-CHIEF WARDEN.

### CHAPTER I.

#### FATHER AND SON.

Walter Bayne was the son of Will Bayne, the foreman of "Hook and Ladder Truck No. 1" of the town of Mill Dale.

He was sixteen years old and going to school at the time of which we write.

Among his school fellows he was very popular, for he had a kindly disposition and a love for fun and frolic that cropped out on all occasions.

Then he was the strongest boy in school, the swiftest runner, and, withal, a manly courage that made all the weaker ones seek him for protection when imposed upon by rude companions.

Walter's father, Will Bayne, was regarded as the most daring fireman in the town. He had saved several lives at various fires, sometimes at the risk of his own, and the papers had praised him to the utmost that language would permit.

The council of the town had voted him a gold medal, and the brave fireman and his wife were very proud of it.

But the Baynes were very poor.

Will Bayne was an assistant foreman in one of the mills and out of the scanty savings of his wages he had been making quarterly payments on the little cottage home in which they lived for several years.

The cottage stood almost on the river bank, and from the windows of the rear rooms they could look out at the stream as it rippled over the rocks towards the falls a half mile below, which furnished the immense water power to the mills.

Young Walter Bayne seemed to have inherited the native instincts of a fireman, for he would spring out of his bed at any hour of the night, at the first clang of the great fire bell, to accompany his father to the scene of conflagration.

Then at school he would organize a boy fire company, set a pile of leaves on fire and make a long run, with an imaginary fire engine, to get to it.

One night he heard the great bell clang, and he and his father left the house at the same time.

Will Bayne ran to the headquarters of the Hook and Ladder Company, whilst Walter made a straight cut for the fire down in the third district.

Walter was there ahead of the hook and ladder by one minute.

People were running out of the house, which was a tenement, whilst the dense black smoke was boiling out of the windows in immense volumes.

Hearing screams on the third floor just as the hook and ladder truck appeared in sight, Walter darted into the house, rushed through the dense black smoke to the third floor, guided by the screams of a girl, and burst in the door of a rear apartment.

There he saw a young girl about his own age shrieking wildly for help.

"Keep quiet now," he said, "and I'll get you out all right."

"Oh, save me! Save me!" she cried, throwing her arms around him.

"Yes, but keep quiet. The stairs are ablaze. Here, let me wrap this around you and you'll be safe enough," and he ran to a bed in a corner of the room and snatched a blanket from it.

That he threw over the young girl, completely enveloping her from head to feet.

Then he caught her in his arms, lifted her clear of the floor and dashed out of the room with her.

The girl quietly submitted, and in another moment he was descending the stairs in a cloud of dense black smoke. He had to hold his breath all the way down-stairs, and when he reached the bottom of the flight he was completely used up and had to swallow a cloud of the smoke.

It strangled him, but he made a desperate run toward the front and passed out to the street, stumbling and rolling over on the ground with his fair burden.

Some of the firemen made a dash for them and brought them away.

The girl was badly scared, but unharmed, when she was taken from the blanket. She turned to Walter and thanked

him for saving her life, and then darted away in the crowd of spectators.

It was quite a surprise to Will Bayne when he saw what his stalwart boy had done.

He patted him on the back and said:

"Good for you, Walter. But you are not a fireman. Keep out of the way, or you may be hurt."

The next moment a piercing scream from the burning building told the perspiring firemen that all had not been saved yet.

There was a rush for the ladder, Will Bayne in the lead.

He ran up like a squirrel, and entered a fourth story window.

There he found a very stout lady some forty years of age screaming for help at the top of her lungs.

"Here's help, ma'am," he said. "Here's a ladder. Make haste and run down. The walls will fall in five minutes."

"Oh, I can't go down a ladder. I'll fall and be killed," and she wrung her hands and kept up her screams for somebody to have her.

"Run down the ladder, ma'am," he repeated. "If you stay here death by fire is certain. If you fall you won't be any worse off, and will have a chance. Get a good hand hold and go slow, and you won't fall. Here, let me help you through the window."

But he could do nothing with her.

She would do nothing but scream for help.

Bayne turned to the window and called through his trumpet:

"Bring up a rope here!"

Jim Bergen, one of the hook and ladder men, seized a strong rope, which was coiled ready for instant use, and dashed up the ladder with it.

It is surprising how fast a good fireman can run up a ladder.

"Here, Jim," said Bayne as the fireman entered the window. "She won't go out on the ladder, so we'll have to lower her with the rope."

"Gosh!" gasped Jim as he saw the bulk of the stout lady. "We need a derrick, Will."

"Yes, but we haven't time to build one," and in a trice the foreman had the rope around the woman's waist.

"Now you must get out, ma'am!" cried Bayne. "You can't fall, for we will hold to the rope. You see it's safe enough now."

She was so nervous and excited that she evidently could not understand a word that was said to her.

"If you don't go out we will throw you out and lower you with the rope!" cried Bayne. "Take your choice and be quick about it!"

She wrung her hands and cried all the more.

"Take hold of her, Jim!"

The two firemen seized and bore her to the window, feet foremost.

The rough handling she received recalled her to something like an appreciation of the situation, and she caught hold of the ladder and began to descend.

But when she arrived opposite the windows of the rooms on the next floor below she was met by a dense volume of smoke, and a wicked tongue of red flame reached out and threatened to catch her.

She stopped and began screaming again.

"Go on down!" cried Bayne.

"Come down! Come down," yelled the firemen below.

Bayne ran down the ladder to her and tried to soothe her excitement.

But it was no use.

"Here, Jim, wrap the rope three times around the rung.

I'm going to push her off. It's the only chance to save her and ourselves."

It was quickly done, and then Bayne pushed her off the ladder, leaving her swinging some thirty feet above the ground.

They lowered her as fast as they dared to let the rope out, and at the foot of the ladder stood Walter Bayne, looking up anxiously.

"Come down, father," he cried, "the walls are going to tumble!"

As soon as the woman touched the ground she was borne away by the firemen.

Seeing the woman safe Bayne and Bergen started to descend the ladder. But when a little over half way down a brick came tumbling from a chimney top, struck the ladder, and bounded outward.

In its descent it struck Will Bayne squarely on top of his head.

His fireman's hat had already fallen, and hence there was no protection for his head.

When the falling brick hit him Bayne sank like a limp rag against the ladder, and the next moment lost his grip.

Down he came, but Walter was below with outstretched arms, and as he came down he caught him.

But the blow bore them both to the ground.

Walter staggered to his feet and started away from the dangerous locality with his father in his arms.

But ere he made three paces the wall came down with a terrible crash, and both son and father were buried beneath the debris.

## CHAPTER II

### THE OLD FIREMAN'S HURT.

A cry of horror broke from the firemen when they saw Bayne, Bergen and Walter crushed under the fallen walls.

But the sounds of their cries had not died away ere they saw Walter rise and shake off the burning debris and proceed to lift his father up again.

They sprang to his assistance, and in an incredibly short space of time had both firemen out of the ruins.

Both Bayne and Bergen were unconscious, and, as there was no hospital in the town, they were conveyed to their homes.

A man ran on ahead to Bayne's cottage down by the river to tell his wife that the men were bringing him home very badly hurt.

She sprang out of bed, and asked, through the window: "Is Will alive?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the man at the door.

She hurriedly dressed and put the house in order, her heart sinking in her bosom like a lump of lead.

Walter was the first to enter the cottage.

He was covered with dirt and dust, and face and hands almost smoked black, and was bruised in a number of places.

"Walter," said his mother, "is your father killed?"

"No, mother, but he is hurt. They are bringing him home."

"Art you hurt?"

"Not much."

The party arrived, bearing the brave fireman on a litter. Mrs. Bayne tried hard to control herself, and succeeded.

"Madam," said good old Dr. Williams, "your husband and son are heroes. They have saved several souls to-night."

"What is that to me if my husband loses his own life?"

she replied in the deep anguish of her soul as she looked at the soot-stained face of the daring fireman on the litter.

"Oh, he is by no means a dead man yet, ma'am," said the doctor. "Just lay him on the bed, and I will look and see to what extent he is hurt."

She showed them into the bedroom in the rear of the front parlor, and they laid him on the bed there.

Dr. Williams made an examination of his hurts, and found that he was bruised in a dozen places, and that some of them were quite serious.

Days and weeks passed, and some of the wounds healed rapidly. Yet the brave fireman remained confined to his bed as helpless as an infant.

The doctors held a consultation, and decided that his spinal column was so badly injured that he would never have the strength to walk again.

It was a terrible blow to the faithful wife and her two children. Little Nellie was but ten years old and could not appreciate it to its full meaning. But Walter and his mother could.

Walter was not very demonstrative in his disposition, but he felt deeply and keenly the hard blow the family had received. But his mother was heartbroken in her grief, though she tried to keep it concealed from her husband.

"Don't worry, mother," said the brave boy to his mother. "The mortgage on the house is not due for several months yet. I'll stop school now and go to work. You don't know how strong I am. I can do a man's work if I am but sixteen years old. I'll take care of you and father and Nellie," and Walter's eyes flashed with the stern resolve to do as he said he would or die in the attempt.

Everybody in Mill Dale had been talking about the heroic rescue of Minnie Taylor by Walter Bayne on the night his father was hurt.

He had brought the girl out unharmed from the very jaws of death, and everybody was singing his praises.

"He has the making of a good fireman in him," said Fire Chief Wyckoff, the foreman of one of the big mills below the falls.

"So he has," said another old fireman. "He gets it from his father, one of the bravest firemen I ever knew. If he were older I'd try hard to get him into our company."

"He will have to leave school now," remarked the chief, "since the income of the family is cut off. I fear they will all have a hard time of it."

"So do I. He is not a skilled workman, and can't get the pay of one."

"Yes. There he goes now. I guess he is on the lookout for a job now."

The foreman saw young Walter come into the mill and go into the business office.

Walter had come to ask for work.

The superintendent was a very stern kind of a man, and very unpopular with the operatives.

He owned a good deal of stock in the mill and drew a large salary also as superintendent.

"Mr. Bradshaw," said Walter, on entering the superintendent's office, "can you give me any work to do?"

The pompous superintendent looked over his gold-rimmed glasses at him, and asked:

"Who are you and what can you do?"

"My name is Walter Bayne. I am strong and willing to work at anything."

"Walter Bayne, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have never worked in a mill before?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I don't see that we can give you any work. We have no work now for green hands."

"Have you no need for a strong laborer?" Bayne asked.

"I know just what I want, young man, without any questioning from you. Get out now!"

Walter looked at him in some surprise for a moment or two, to the very great annoyance of the superintendent.

But he opened the office door and passed out without saying another word, and was about to leave the mill, when Foreman Wyckoff spoke to him, saying:

"Looking for work, Walter?"

"Yes, sir."

"None here?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I am sorry. Wherever you apply refer to me—the chief of the fire department—and I'll say all the good things I can in your favor."

"Thank you, sir," said Walter. "I know that will help me find work somewhere," and he bowed to the chief and passed out of the mill.

He called at three other mills with a like result, and the outlook was very discouraging, for the mills furnished all the employment to be had in the town—almost.

On returning home in the middle of the afternoon he reported to his mother and father his failure to find work.

"You can try again to-morrow," said the father.

"Yes, and so I will," he replied. "But I know what I can do. I can catch some fish for supper," and he looked out of the window at the water dancing over the rocks. "Just on the other side of that big boulder out there I can get two or three big fine fish, and you can lie here and see me land 'em on the rock, father."

Walter left the house and a half hour later he was leaping from rock to rock, with a ten foot board in his hand, on which he intended to cross over to the big boulder.

His father lay in his bed by the window and watched him make his way to the rock on the board.

Soon he was deeply engaged in angling for the fish he suspected of making a home under the rock, and in a little while he caught a fine trout weighing some two or three pounds.

He held it aloft to let his father see the beauty. He caught a glimpse of his mother's face at the window and held the fish up again.

Then he angled for another, and pretty soon had the good luck to catch a larger one.

"This is luck as well as fun," he said, "and it means a good supper all around, too."

"Oh, Walter," called a girlish voice behind him. "May I come out there and fish with you?"

It was the voice of Josie Wyckoff, the only daughter of the chief of the fire department.

"Yes, come ahead!" he answered, and she came tripping over the stones like a fairy, and finally walked the plank which landed her by his side.

"Oh, those are beauties!" she exclaimed, on seeing the two he had just caught.

"So they are. Here, let me bait your hook so you can try your luck."

"You are kind, Walter," she said, as he carefully baited her hook for her.

"Just drop it over on that side now, and I'll bet you catch a big one."

She did so, and in a very little while was pulling hard at a fish who seemed determined not to leave the water.

"Steady, Josie!" cried Walter, and she held a taut line on the fish, moving about the rock in order to get plenty of room to play him.

Suddenly her feet slipped from under her and she disap-

peared from sight like a flash. The next instant Walter dropped his pole and plunged in after her. His mother seeing him do that fell fainting to the floor by her husband's bedside.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE YOUNG FIREMAN.

Walter Bayne was a splendid swimmer, and had no fear of deep water.

Many a time he had leaped into water ten times his depth and thought nothing of it.

But now he was in a mad current which went leaping over rocks and ragged boulders on its way to the falls below.

Yet the danger did not deter him. He never thought of it, in fact, but boldly plunged in and came up within a few feet of her.

A few bold strokes brought him to her. He caught and held her head above the water.

She caught him around his neck and held on for dear life.

"Don't squeeze me so hard, Josie," he said. "Hold on to my collar and I'll swim out with you."

"Save me!" gasped the terror-stricken girl.

"I will if you will hold on to my collar," he replied.

The current crashed them against a rock just below the surface of the water, and came near separating them.

Josie uttered a cry of pain and fear, but Walter held on to her and said:

"Now hold on to me and I can make yonder rock, where we will be safe."

She did hold on to him, and the brave youth struck out to make the point some distance below and quite near the shore.

By this time the alarm had spread through the nearest mill that a boy and girl were drowning in the river, and fully two hundred men and women ran out to see if they could not render aid.

"Pull hard, lad!" cried a strong-lunged mill-hand. "Pull hard and make for yonder rock! Hold onto him, girl! God help the brave boy! Pull hard! A few more brave strokes! Down they go! That current is terrible! Ah! There they are again! Pull hard now! Bravely done, my boy! You've a brave man! Be careful! If you miss it you'll go over the falls! Pull hard! Two or three more strokes! Ah! There you are! Thank God!" and the strong man was so wrought up that he burst into tears of joy when he saw that the lad had reached the rock and saved both himself and the girl. Women who witnessed the brave boy's struggle cried and laughed by turns.

"Why, it's Walt Bayne!" cried one of the women.

"A hero like his father!" cried another.

"And Josie Wyckoff! Here, Wyckoff! It's your Josie! She is safe, thank God!"

Wyckoff was chief of the fire department and foreman in the mill where William Bayne, Walt's father, had worked.

When the two were brought ashore Josie was clasped to her father's heart, and brave Walter's hand was shaken by all the men and women who could get at him.

"Walter, my boy!" exclaimed Chief Wyckoff, grasping the lad's hand, "you have saved my child! I am your friend for life. You are a brave boy, Walter. A brave boy! You are the son of the bravest man I ever knew, and you are just like him."

The overjoyed father bore his daughter home in his arms

and Walter turned and ran to his home to put on a dry suit of clothes.

"Oh, my son!" screamed his mother, on seeing him enter alive and well. "Thank God, you are saved!"

"Did you save the girl, Walter?" his father asked from the next room.

"Yes, father," he replied.

"Come here and give me your hand, boy! You did just what I would have done. You are a chip off the old block!" and father and son clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes.

"I couldn't help it, father," said Walter. "She couldn't swim and I could. My fish are out there on that rock. I'll run out and get them, for they are the finest I've caught in many a day."

He ran out of the house again without changing his clothes, and in ten minutes more was back in the house with fish enough for three meals.

Then he changed his clothes and talked with his father and mother and little Nellie till evening, when Chief Wyckoff and his wife called at the house to see the parents and again thank the son for saving their only child from a watery grave.

When they went away they left with the happy mother an order for a barrel of flour and a ton of coal.

"Hello!" exclaimed Walter, when he heard his mother tell his father of the gift. "I am of some account after all, ain't I?"

"Of course you are," said the father. "He who saves a life is greater than he who captures a city."

Later in the week the hook and ladder company of which Walter Bayne's father was foreman when he was hurt elected Walter an honorary member, and when the secretary notified him of the fact his father's eyes brightened.

"That's an honor you ought to be proud of, my boy," he said. "None but men grown and solid citizens at that are ever so honored. You ought to be proud of it."

"I am proud of it, father, and am going to run with 'em after this."

"That's right. Mary, girl. Fix up my old fireman's suit for him. You will have to cut about two inches off the trousers. His head and mine are the same size. He can wear the helmet. Stand in your father's place, my boy, and I know you won't disgrace the name."

"Will! Will!" exclaimed Mrs. Bayne. "What are you saying to the boy? He is adventurous and reckless enough now without any encouragement in that direction. I would prefer that he keep out of the fire company."

"That isn't like you, Mary, my girl," said the brave fireman. "You are letting your fears get the better of you. Don't do that, Mary."

Mrs. Bayne turned away with a shudder.

The next day the alterations in the father's fireman's suit were made and Walter tried them on.

He looked every inch a fireman.

"Go down to the company's headquarters this evening, my boy," said his father, "and let 'em see you. Tell 'em that I sent you to do duty in my place, and that you will answer for the name of William Bayne."

Walter went down to the company's quarters, where the boys received him with a wild cheer.

"My father told me to answer to his name when it is called," he said.

"Yes, and to your own, too," said the assistant foreman. "You are under age, but we'll suspend the rules to get you in. You come up to the mark in everything else."

"Yes, that's so," cried a dozen others.

Chief Wyckoff came in, and the greeting he gave Walter aroused the enthusiasm of the boys to the highest pitch.

"I am glad you are with us, my boy," said the chief, "because we can now help—"

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The great fire-bell struck for the third district, and every fireman sprang to his post.

Walter caught the enthusiasm, and dashed away with them.

He was as fleet of foot as the swiftest of them, and when they reached the scene of the fire he was as fresh as any man in the company.

It was a six story tenement house which had caught fire, and it was burning like a tinder-box.

He dashed into the burning building with two other firemen, and soon came out with a little boy in one arm and a girl on the other.

Delivering them to sympathizers, he darted into the building and ran up two flights, where he found two terror-stricken women.

Two other firemen were with him; but when they undertook to go down with them they found all retreat cut off.

The entire stairway was in flames.

"Up to the next floor!" cried one of the firemen, and they retreated.

There they found that they would have to go to the next floor, which they found to be the top one.

"The ladder can't reach the window!" cried one of the firemen, as he looked out and down at the firemen.

"To the roof, then!" cried the other.

They ran up the little ladder which led to the scuttle in the roof, forced it open and emerged to the top of the doomed building.

There they saw that the crowd below were screaming and pointing up to the next house, which was also burning.

Walter Bayne threw himself face downward on the roof, crawled to the edge and looked over.

"My God!" he cried. "There are two young girls in the rooms just below us, and they are doomed unless we can save them."

A clothes line was on the stakes on the roof, and Walter quickly seized it, doubled it, and proceeded to fasten it around his waist.

"Here!" he cried. "You two are strong enough to hold me. Lower me to that window, and I'll save 'em or perish with 'em."

"Good! Brave boy!" exclaimed one of the firemen, and the two did as he asked.

The next moment the vast crowd of spectators below were dismayed at seeing a fireman suspended from the roof.

When he arrived at the window he reached out, caught hold of the blind, and pulled himself in.

Two young girls immediately threw themselves on him, crying:

"Save us! Oh, do please save us!"

"Yes, that's what I came for," he replied. "Here, quick! Let me tie you—one of you—with this rope, and they'll pull you up to the roof."

He quickly tied the rope around one of the young girl's waist, and then stood upon the window sill, and sung out to the firemen on the roof:

"Pull away! Up with her!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A PERILOUS RESCUE.

The situation was one of intense dramatic interest as well as of danger.

To the vast crowd of spectators below, whose upturned

faces were exposed by the red glare of the burning building, it seemed as if the daring boy must fall and be dashed to pieces on the pavement.

But he held on to the rope with one hand and with the other retained his hold on the shutter, whilst calling to the two firemen on the roof to pull hard.

They did pull, and one of the young girls swung out of the window with a piercing shriek.

The spectators held their breaths in awful, painful suspense, as the young girl hung at that dizzy height.

The slightest accident and death would be inevitable and quick.

But no accident happened, and the half unconscious young girl was drawn safely to the roof, amid the wild cheers of the crowd below.

Then the rope was lowered again and Walter caught it.

In another minute he had it tied securely around the waist of the other girl.

"Pull away!" he yelled, and even the people below heard his words and took up the cry.

"Pull away, pull away!" came up from the spectators like the roar of old ocean in a storm.

Again a girl swung out of the window, and again did the sturdy fellows on the roof pull hard on the rope that held a human life suspended between earth and sky.

She was landed safely, and again the frantic yells came up from below.

"Quick! quick!" yelled the hook and ladder boys below. "Lower the rope to Walt. The flames have reached him! Quick, Henry, or you'll be too late!"

They hurriedly lowered the rope and Walter reached out for it, though the window was like a smoke-stack of a steamboat, so great was the volume of smoke that poured through it.

After having tied the rope around himself securely, he sung out:

"All right! Pull away!"

They did pull away, and as Walter was a pretty solid sort of a boy, they found it hard work. It was quite different from lowering him from the roof, and for a time, it seemed as if they would not be able to pull him up.

But they succeeded at last, and when the crowd below saw that he was safe, they made the welkin ring with their cheers.

All three were nearly exhausted from the hard strain, and they laid down on the hot roof to rest a minute or two.

"Oh, come away!" cried one of the girls. "The fire will soon burst through the roof!"

"That's so," said Walter, rising to his feet and staggering away toward the roofs on the right of them. "Come on, boys, or you'll get caught."

The other two staggered to their feet and slowly followed him and the two girls off the heated roof.

The firemen below, seeing that they had escaped to another roof, hastened to enter a house two doors from the burning building, and asked permission to pass up through to the roof.

It was promptly granted, and one of them ran up to the scuttle and unfastened it.

"Here you are!" he cried, as he threw it open. "Come down now as quickly as you can."

They made haste to get down, Walter showing the two girls how to get down through the scuttle.

When they reached the street, the crowd again cheered them, and Walter became the hero of the hour from that moment.

Chief Wyckoff ran up to him and grasped his hand, saying:

"Walter Bayne, you are a hero. I am proud to take you by the hand. Those girls would have perished but for you."

"What's the matter with the two fellows who pulled 'em up to the roof?" Walter asked, as he returned the chief's hand-shake.

"Oh, they are all right, too," was the reply, "but the main credit belongs to you."

Then the chief grasped the hands of the other two firemen and said:

"You three have the stuff that heroes are made of. Stand back now and rest awhile. There are no more lives to be saved."

They stood aside to let other firemen play on the fire, and were instantly surrounded by the eager crowd of spectators who wanted to shake each one of them by the hand.

By and by the hook and ladder truck started to return to their headquarters, and on the way back the crowd gave them a send-off that made them feel proud of their achievements that night.

The next morning everybody in the town was talking about the heroic daring of the sixteen-year-old fireman who had saved the lives of the two poor girls.

Chief Wyckoff went by the house of Will Bayne on his way to the mill to tell him about it, and say:

"It would have done your heart good to see him. He seemed to bear a charmed life, and he went where no other fireman would have dared to go, and came out unharmed."

"I am proud of my brave boy, chief," said the helpless ex-fireman. "But don't let him be so reckless, or he'll be brought home dead some day or evening."

"I wish with all my heart that he was out of that fire company," said Mrs. Bayne. "If he should be crippled or killed what would become of us?"

"Don't talk that way, Mary," said Will Bayne, "or the chief may think you are opposed to our boy saving a human life."

"I am not opposed to that. I would do that myself at the risk of my own life. But there are many good people in this town who are not firemen. They never risk their lives at a fire. Why should my boy risk his life? Is not one in a family enough to lose?"

"Come, come, Mary," said Will Bayne. "Every one to his liking. Walter likes it, and he has proven himself a hero. He may yet—"

"I wish he did not like it," she retorted, interrupting him.

Then she turned to Wyckoff and asked if Walter could not be given work in the mill where he was employed.

"There is no room for him at present," he replied, "but I am going to keep a sharp lookout for him, and if there is any chance for him I will let him know."

The chief went on to the mill, and Walter soon after started in search of work.

The family were now reduced to almost absolute want, if not starvation.

To make matters worse, the man who held the mortgage on their little home sent a written notice that he expected the last payment to be made when due, as he had made arrangements to use the money.

"We shall lose our home," said Mrs. Bayne, "for we cannot make the payment. We have no money even for bread."

Walter visited several mills and stores in quest of work and failed to get it.

"That is awful," he said. "We shall have to pawn the very beds we sleep on if—"

"Clang! Clang! Clang!"

The great fire-bell startled the town, and in an instant every fireman, wherever employed, made a break for the post of duty.

The boy fireman and the Hook and Ladder company reached the fire ahead of the engines, and found that it was in the finest hotel in the town.

The house was filled with guests, and the panic among them was simply terrible.

Women and children on almost every floor shrieked for help, and the firemen had a busy time getting them out.

The building was a four story frame, the wood being dry and very inflammable, hence it was impossible to save it. In looking through the rooms on the third floor to see that no one was left, Walter Bayne discovered a sick lady who had been forgotten in the excitement.

She was very ill and could not stand on her feet.

"Madam, I'll wrap the bed-clothes about you, and get you out," he said, suiting his actions to his words.

He gathered her in his arms and made a dash for the stairs, which were now all ablaze.

Just as he passed out of the door into the corridor, he caught a glimpse of a man's face and heard a voice say:

"Hurry out or you're lost," and at the same time felt his feet kicked out from under him.

He fell to the floor with his burden, though he managed to prevent her receiving any hurt. But she was torn from his grasp, and when he rose to his feet he could see nothing of her.

The smoke was so dense that he could not see anything at all, and so he hurried away to escape.

But as he made his way to the stairs he stumbled over a body, and stooping to examine it found it to be that of the sick lady he had lost.

Quick as he possibly could he snatched her up again and hurried down-stairs and succeeded in reaching the street in an almost exhausted condition.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOTEL FIRE—A RESCUE AND SINGULAR MISHAP.

Out on the street one of the firemen came to his relief on seeing him reel and stagger with his burden in his arms.

"This way, Walt," said the fireman, leading him across the street so as to be as far removed from the heat as possible.

The crowd gave way for them, seeing that a sick lady was in the arms of one of them, and they pushed on till they struck a private house, on the stoop of which stood a number of ladies.

"Can we leave this sick woman in your house till she can be moved again?" the fireman asked of a portly old lady on the stoop.

"Yes, of course," was the prompt reply. "Come right in with her," and she led the way into the house, followed by Walter and the other fireman.

"Lay her on the bed—wait a moment till I arrange it," and the elderly lady soon had the bed in good order to receive the sick woman.

She was deposited there, and found to be unconscious.

"Send for a doctor," Walter said. "She may be in a faint," and with that he and the other fireman left the house to return to the scene of conflagration.

On the way back he saw good old Dr. Williams in the crowd, and said to him:

"Doctor, there's a sick lady in the red-brick house down

there, whom I took out of the hotel. She seems half dead. You had better see her."

"Ah. She must be my patient," said the doctor. "I was wondering if she had been saved," and he hurried off to see her.

The hotel was reduced to ashes and a row of stores on the south side of it threatened with destruction.

Walter worked with the hook and ladder boys till there was no more need of their services, after which he returned to headquarters with them.

He was hungry—very hungry, and had nothing with which to buy a meal, and he knew that there was no more bread at home than would be needed for supper.

What was he to do?

He was too proud to let any one know his situation.

"I'll catch some fish," he said. "They won't cost me anything, and I guess I'll have a square meal at supper. What in heaven's name shall be done for bread to-morrow?"

He returned home, told his mother and father about the fire at the hotel, and then went to the river.

"I can't understand why that man tripped me up and took the sick woman away from me," he said to himself, as he sat there on the rock and angled for a bite. "I got a glimpse of his face, and saw that he had a black mustache and very large nose. He kicked my feet from under me and downed me as slick as wet soap. What did he do that?"

"If he wanted to help me save the woman why did he not say so, and ask to let him take her out. He snatched her from me when I was down, and then left her at the head of the stairs. I wonder if he got out all right himself?"

He was thinking of the incident and debating with himself when he felt a pull at his hook. A quick jerk told him that he had a big fish, and that he would have to be wary in landing him.

His invalid father was looking at him from the bedroom window, and he wanted to make sure of the prize. Some twenty minutes was spent in trying to land him, and at last he succeeded in doing so, the prize proving to be a sixteen-pounder.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. "That's luck! I'll take him to the house at once and let mother clean him. He'll make four or five square meals."

He gathered up the prize and returned home with it.

"Here's fish enough for you, mother," he said, as he entered the kitchen.

"Oh, mercy!" she cried on seeing it. "That's the largest you ever caught."

"I believe it is."

"We can't eat it all, Walter, and it won't keep in warm weather. You can get a price for it at one of the hotels, and buy some bread and butter and—"

"But you want something else besides bread and butter, mother."

"Yes. Sell this big one, and then catch another one for supper. You will have plenty of time."

He acted on her suggestion and sold the big fish for \$1.50, gave her the money, and then caught enough for supper and breakfast.

That evening at the headquarters of the hook and ladder company he was telling some of the firemen about the big fish, when a man came to the door and asked if Walter Bayne was in.

"Yes," said a fireman, "he is. Come in. Walter?"

"Hello," answered Walter.

"A gentleman here wishes to see you."

He went to the door, and there met a man, an entire stranger to him, who asked:

"Are you Walter Bayne?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were at the fire this morning?"

"Yes, I was there."

"You saved a sick lady from the flames?"

"Yes, I believe I did."

"Well, I am her husband. I have come to thank you and give you this," and he thrust a purse into Walter's hand.

Then he started to turn away and leave without another word, when Walter caught hold of his arm and said:

"Stop, please, and allow me to thank you, and also ask if the lady is any worse for the terrible excitement through which she passed?"

"Thanks. I think she is a little better if anything," was the reply.

Something in the man's voice excited a desire on Walter's part to see his face, for the stranger stood outside in the shadow. He took him by the arm and pulled him into the light where he saw the face of the man who had tripped him up in the corridor of the burning hotel that morning.

But the mustache was gone. The nose was unmistakable, though, and the voice he was sure of.

Walter was staggered, but he did not say anything other than to again thank the man for calling.

"What did he give you, Walt?" the fireman who had called him to the door asked.

"I don't know," replied Walt. "I'll look and see," and he produced the purse and examined its contents.

"Money, by George!" exclaimed one of the firemen as he saw a roll of bills taken from the purse.

"Well, I'm glad of that," said Walter, proceeding to count the bills. "Here are twenty \$5 bills, \$100 in all."

"What a windfall!"

"What's his name?" a dozen voices asked.

The purse was examined again, but nothing was found to indicate who the man was. No name—nothing whatever of a written character save what was on the bills.

"Well, you're in luck, my boy," said an old fireman, laying his hand on Walt's shoulder, "and I am glad of it for your father's sake."

They all congratulated him on his good fortune, and he soon left the truck house to hasten home to let his mother know the good news.

On his way home Walter could not help thinking of the man who had tripped him up in the corridor of the burning hotel.

"He is the same man," he said to himself, "though he has cut his mustache off. I knew his voice and recognized his nose. What does it mean? He did not care to have me see him in the light to-night when he gave me that purse. I've a mind to tell father all about it and see if he can understand it. It couldn't have been an accident, that tripping-up business, for he swept my feet from under me like a flash, and—"

Crack!

A flash and the report of a pistol within a few feet of him as he was passing an old barn on his way home told him that somebody had shot at his head.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SHOT IN THE DARK—THE SICK LADY AGAIN.

The flash of the shot nearly blinded the young fireman, who staggered back several paces as if about to fall.

He was about to spring at his assailant when a voice some fifty yards on the left sang out

"Hello, there! Mind how you shoot! You came near hitting me that time."

On hearing that the unknown marksman turned and ran from the spot with such speed as to place him utterly out of sight in the darkness of the night.

"What's the matter there?" cried the voice out on the left, and footsteps were heard approaching.

"That's what I want to know myself," replied Walter, as a man, a citizen on his way home, came up.

"Who fired that shot?"

"I don't know."

"Who was he shooting at?"

"I thought he was shooting at me, as the flash was almost in my face."

"Well, the bullet came within an ace of hitting me. I heard it whistle by me. Have you any idea who done it?"

"Not the least in the world, sir," replied Walter. "I haven't an enemy that I know of."

"Who are you, young man?"

"My name is Walter Bayne."

"The young fireman."

"Yes, sir."

"I have heard of you. I can't see why anybody should want to shoot you. Maybe it was some half drunken fool who wanted to empty his revolver."

"Maybe so, but it looked as if he wanted to blow my head off," and Walter continued on his way home, and the citizen proceeded in the direction of his own residence.

When he reached home, Walter found that his mother had gone to bed, so he did not have time to acquaint her with his good fortune.

He went to bed himself and lay awake for hours trying to reason out the incidents growing out of the hotel fire.

"If that sick woman's husband really tripped me up on purpose," he said to himself, "why did he come and give me \$100 to-night for saving her life? Then why did he shave off his mustache? Maybe he got it burned and had to do it. Hanged if it don't puzzle me, anyway. I am sure that somebody shot at me at the corner of Richardson's barn, for the pistol was pointed right at my face when it exploded. Well, maybe I'll find out some day. I just know that mother will be a happy woman in the morning when she finds out about the \$100. It's just half enough to pay off the mortgage on our home."

He fell asleep and slept till morning, when he sprang up and went out into the kitchen where his mother was preparing some of his fish for breakfast.

"Mother," he said, "I have a present for you," and he threw the roll of bills into her lap.

She gave a scream and snatched up the bills.

"Where did you get this?" she asked.

"They were given to me last night," he replied.

"Who gave them to you?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know the man or woman who gave you such a roll of money as this?"

"No, mother. He did not give me a chance to find out," and then he proceeded to tell her the story of the sick woman at the hotel and how he succeeded in saving her life, adding:

"And last night a man who said he was her husband came to the hook and ladder headquarters and gave me this purse with that roll of bills in it. He went away without giving us a chance to find out who he was."

"Heaven bless him whoever he is" cried his mother, spring-

ing up and running into the bed-room where her husband lay.

"Look! Look, Will!" she cried, showing him the bills. "A grateful husband gave this to our Walter for saving the life of his invalid wife yesterday at the hotel fire!"

"Well, that's good," said Bill Bayne, gazing at the roll of bills in her hand. "Our boy is of some use after all, isn't he?"

"Heaven bless him—yes! Another hundred would pay off the mortgage. Oh, if we could only get it from somebody or somewhere!"

"Yes—put it away and don't spend a cent of it. We'll have need for it yet. Maybe we can get enough to pay off the mortgage yet."

Mrs. Bayne was a happy mother that morning. She no longer pleaded with Walter not to be a fireman. She was glad that he had saved human life, and wanted him to save all he could.

"I know it would make you feel better, mother," he said, as he sat down to breakfast. "When I catch on to a good job of work and begin to earn money regularly, you won't want for anything."

"I shall feel much better when you get the job," she remarked.

"Oh, yes, of course. I think Mr. Wyckoff will find a place for me somewhere in the mill where he works."

"I hope so."

Walter went out again in quest of work, and in passing through Main street he met good old Dr. Williams, who hailed him with:

"Hello, Walter!"

Walter tipped his hat to him and went up and took his hand.

"I hear that you are in luck, Walter," the doctor said.

"Yes, sir, a little bit."

"I heard the husband of that sick lady speaking of you in the highest terms of praise. He gave you \$100, did he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"It ought to have been a thousand. They are very rich. The lady is actually better since the fire. The excitement seemed to have benefitted her. She wants to see you. When can you call at the hotel?"

"What hotel?"

"Oh, they have taken rooms at the River House," said the doctor. "Better rooms than the others were."

"What is their name?"

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard their name?"

"No, sir."

"Well, that's strange. Their name is Bosworth, and they come from Boston, I believe, for a change of air for Mrs. Bosworth."

"Didn't Mr. Bosworth have a big black mustache, doctor?" Walter asked.

"Yes, and it was ruined by the fire so he had to shave it off to start a new one. That was pretty hot work, was it not?"

"Yes, indeed. He has a big nose, too, hasn't he?"

"Yes. Why, didn't you see him when he gave you the money last night?"

"Yes, sir, but I thought I had seen him once before, and when I saw him last night without his mustache I was puzzled to make him out."

"Of course; that was natural. Come to the hotel and see her this afternoon if you have time. She asked me to tell you to come, and I would advise you not to fail to do so."

"I shall call at 3 o'clock," said Walter.

"Well, I shall tell her that so she will be expecting you," and the doctor passed on.

At 3 o'clock precisely Walter entered the hotel, and going to the clerk's desk, said:

"I have been sent for by Mrs. Bosworth. Will you please send some one to show me the way up to her rooms?"

"Yes," said the clerk, tapping a bell, to which a boy responded. "Show this gentleman to Room 22."

The boy turned and led the way up-stairs and Walter followed him.

At the top of the first flight they met Mr. Bosworth, who stopped the boy, saying to him:

"You may go back. I'll show him the rest of the way myself."

The boy returned and left Walter with the husband of the sick lady.

"What is wanted?" Mr. Bosworth asked, turning to the young fireman.

"Dr. Williams requested me to call at three o'clock, as Mrs. Bosworth wanted to see me," replied Walter, with great frankness.

"Young man, can you keep a secret," Bosworth asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll give you one to keep. Mrs. Bosworth is not in her right mind. You must never attempt to see her, as to do so may cost you your life. Keep all that a profound secret and go away at once!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN SEARCH OF WORK—THE FIGHT IN THE MILL.

To say that Walter Bayne was surprised at the words of Mr. Bosworth would be but a very mild way of putting it. He was astonished, for Dr. Williams had not said a word to him in regard to the sanity of the sick lady.

The thought that flashed through his mind was that Dr. Williams would not betray a professional secret, and had left him to find out the facts for himself.

He stood at the head of the stairs, and the very menacing attitude and tone of Mr. Bosworth impressed him with the idea that he had no other recourse than to retire under the circumstances.

"Your wishes shall be respected, sir," he said to him, as he turned to go down the stairs.

"Thanks, sir," returned Bosworth grasping his arm. "Of course you will keep the secret to yourself, and spare my feelings. I would not have the public know the facts under any consideration."

"I have nothing whatever to do with your private affairs, Mr. Bosworth," replied Walter, "and do not wish to."

With that he turned and made his way down-stairs again wondering why the doctor had not posted him as to the mental condition of his patient.

He was angry with himself for having gone to the hotel, for he had received the impression from Bosworth's manner toward him that he had been denied access to the room by the aristocratic husband because he was poor and penniless.

That thought made his eyes flash and his cheeks glow with indignation.

"Blast him!" he hissed through his clenched teeth. "I am a better man than he is any day, and I'll bet that I have a better education than he has. He has nothing but money, whilst I have everything else but that. Hanged if I don't tell Dr. Williams how I have been treated. It won't be giving the secret away, for he knows all about it, of course."

He passed on down the street and on the corner below stopped to look about him.

A policeman with whom he was acquainted came up to him and said:

"That was a lucky fire for you yesterday, Walter."

"How so?"

"Why, the paper says Mr. Bosworth gave you \$100 last night for saving the life of his wife."

"Oh, yes, so he did. But I wonder if he went and told the newspaper men about it himself?"

The officer laughed and asked:

"What do you care if he did, as long as you have the money. I'd like to tackle a fire like that myself about once a day all the year round. What started that fire?"

"I don't know."

"I hear that the chief of the fire department has been ordered to report all he knows about it."

"Well, I think it ought to be investigated, and——"

He stopped short and looked around at a man who had come up behind him so close that he touched him.

The man was Bosworth, the husband of the sick lady.

He bowed and moved aside to let him pass, and the stranger returned the bow and went on, though his eyes quickly glanced at the face of the young fireman.

"That man is Bosworth," remarked Walter to the policeman, when the former had passed them.

"Eh! Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, he didn't speak to you as though he was glad you saved his wife."

"Oh, he thinks that the one hundred dollars settled all that. He is one of the 'high pie' kind of men, I guess."

"No doubt of it. Pity he didn't get burned up yesterday."

"Yes, I think so, too," and Walter walked down the street toward the river, where stood a mill which he had not yet applied to for work. He soon reached the mill and made his way into the business office where he asked for work.

"Go up to the third floor," said a clerk in the office. "The superintendent will attend to you."

He made his way up two flights of stairs and, not seeing the superintendent there, asked one of the girls where he could be found.

The girl looked up and exclaimed:

"Oh, here's Walter Bayne!" and then she grasped his hand and fairly danced around him, saying: "I am so glad to see you! I owe you my life!"

She was one of the two sisters whose lives he had saved by descending to their window from the roof.

The other sister seeing who he was ran up to him also to show her gratitude.

Then all the other girls left their posts to crowd around and see him, for they had talked about nothing else during the past week but his daring exploits.

"I want to see the superintendent, girls," he said, shaking hands with as many as he could.

"Thunder and lightning!" yelled an angry voice behind him. "What does this mean! Back to your work, every one of you!"

The girls darted away with scared looks and many little feminine screams, and resumed their work without even once looking back at the superintendent.

"Who are you, and what do you want by——"

"The man in the office down-stairs sent me up to see the superintendent," said Walter, not waiting for him to finish his question.

"But why have you interfered with the girls at work?"

"I am not responsible for that. As soon as I came up here they recognized me and came up to shake hands with

me. I am not brute enough to tell them to go back to work."

"Who are you?"

"I am Walter Bayne, at your service, and came here to see if I could get employment."

"Ah. I understand why the girls acted like geese. You saved the lives of two of them, and the others all wanted to see you. Business. I shall dock every one on this floor for lost time," and he looked around the room with an angry stare.

"Is that the way you treat your operatives," Walter asked.  
"That's the rule of the mill."

"I came here in search of work, but I guess I don't care to work in this mill. I know something about that docking business. They lost five minutes, but they'll be docked an hour, so the mill gets fifty-five minutes work out of each girl for which they get no pay."

"Young man, you want to go right down-stairs and make a straight shoot for the front door, to avoid being fired out of a window," and the superintendent glared at him as he made the remark.

"I'll do that, sir," returned Walter, "but won't be in a very great hurry about it. Who is your bouncer here?"

"I can do all the bouncing without any trouble," and he seized Walter by the collar and attempted to jerk him toward the stairs.

He tore the coat, and the next moment Walter dealt him a blow that sent him rolling headlong down the stairs ahead of him.

Walter then coolly walked down the stairs, stepping over the half-unconscious superintendent and tripped down the second flight as though nothing had occurred to mar his serenity.

Just as he reached the front door a man from the office asked:

"Did you see the superintendent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get a job?"

"No, sir."

"Why, he said this morning that he wanted two men for the——" Hello"

The superintendent came rushing at the young fireman like a tiger on the spring.

Walter wheeled, gave him a blow that laid him out on the floor, and then passed out of the mill.

No one came out in pursuit of him, and in a few minutes more he was walking leisurely along up the street toward the headquarters of Hook and Ladder Company No. 1.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WALTER TURNS THE TABLES.

Walter remained at the truck house till near sunset, and then he left to go home.

On the way he met Dr. Williams, who hailed him with:

"I say, Walter, you foolish boy!"

"What is it, doctor?"

"Why have you not been to see Mrs. Bosworth? I told her that you would call at three o'clock. I was there at four, and she was very much disappointed because you did not come. How foolish of you."

"Doctor, I did go," he said.

"Eh! What?"

"I did go, and was met at the head of the stairs by Mr.

Bosworth, who told me Mrs. Bosworth was insane, and that if I tried to see her it would be at the peril of my life."

Dr. Williams was utterly dumfounded at what he heard, and stared at the young fireman as though half inclined to doubt the truth of what he had said.

"I don't think I quite understand you, Walter," he said.  
"Just say that all over again and maybe I'll catch it."

Walter repeated his statement, and the doctor continued staring him in the face as he listened.

"She is no more insane than you or I, Walter," he finally said, "and I cannot understand why he should say so. What you have told me astonishes me beyond measure. And did he tell you to say nothing to any one about what he had said?"

"He did."

"Well, I can't understand it. She is not out of her head, that is certain. She spoke so highly of you in his presence that he may have taken offense at it. She heard that he had given you a purse with one hundred dollars in it, and asked me to tell you to come and see her."

"Doctor, there is something else I want to tell you about him," said Walter, after a pause of some minutes, "and I've been worrying about it ever since it occurred."

"Well, what was it? Out with it and I'll see what I can make out of it."

"It is about my rescue of Mrs. Bosworth. I was running along the corridors of the hotel looking into all the rooms to make sure that everybody was out, when I found one locked. I kicked it open and found Mrs. Bosworth very sick in bed. I took her in my arms, wrapped in the bedclothes and started out with her. The corridor was filled with a dense smoke. A man rushed up to me, told me to hurry out, tripped me by kicking my feet from under me, took the woman out of my arms and disappeared with her. I got on my feet as soon as I could and rushed for the stairs. At the head of the stairs I stumbled over the sick woman who had been left there, and taking her up the second time, brought her out safely. I remember seeing the face of the man who tripped me up, and he had a very large nose and big black mustache. When I saw Mr. Bosworth for the first time last night I recognized his nose and voice, though his mustache was gone. He says it got burnt and he had to have it cut off. Now what do you think of that?"

Dr. Williams looked puzzled, and silently shook his head.

"I don't know what to think of it, my dear boy," he said. "But I would advise you not to say anything about it till I have had time to think it over. It seems to me that there is something wrong somewhere. He says that he took his wife out of your arms to save her himself, and that somebody ran against him, knocked him down, and that when he got up he was so blinded by the smoke that he could not find her. One of the firemen, he says, caught hold of him and ran down the stairs with him. She says that she recollects hearing his voice when he spoke to you, remembers your fall, and then was so confused and excited after that as to be utterly unable to say what happened."

"Well, it's very strange that he should trip me up the way he did."

"Yes. But are you sure it was done purposely?"

"Doctor, there is no process of reasoning that could remove that impression from my mind," Walter replied. "I am positive of it. It could not have been done otherwise."

"Maybe he did it to get his wife away from you. Have you asked him about it?"

"No; nor do I intend to," he replied. "I don't want to have anything more to do with him, since he lied to me to-day about his wife being out of her head. I am sure I don't want to see his wife if he objects."

"Well, don't say anything about it till I see them again," advised the doctor, "which I will do to-morrow."

"Oh, I won't say a word," and so they parted.

Walter went on his way home and sat down by his father's bedside to tell him all the news he had heard out in the town.

While they were at supper a knock at the front door startled them.

Little Nellie ran to see who it was.

"I want to see Walter," said a man at the door.

"Oh, it's Mr. Wilson," cried Nellie, on recognizing the visitor. "Come in, please."

Mr. Wilson was a constable, and was well acquainted with the family.

Walter went to the door to see him, suspecting the object of his visit.

"I have a warrant for you, Walter," he said, "sworn out by Trainor of the Columbian Mills."

"Yes, I expected it. I knocked him down twice this afternoon."

"I am sorry my duty compels me to take you to the police station till morning."

"What's the use of that?" Walter asked. "I'll be on hand to-morrow when wanted."

"I must do my duty, Walter," said the constable. "You would do the same yourself."

"Yes. When was the warrant given to you?"

"Now, ten minutes ago."

"By whom?"

"Mr. Trainor himself, and he told me to arrest you at once."

"Very well. I'll go with you," and he went back to tell his mother all about it.

Mrs. Bayne was badly frightened, but Walter and the constable both told her that it was nothing to be worried about.

Walter went with him to the police station, where he was locked up for the night.

"This was done to keep me from giving bail," he said, after he had been locked up an hour. "I'll get even with him for it if I have to suffer for it."

Early the next morning he sent for a young lawyer who was a member of the Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. The lawyer came, and was very much surprised at what had taken place.

He wanted to degrade you as much as he could by having you arrested at a time when you could not arrange about bail. I'll give him a dose for that if you are willing to remain here another night."

"I'll leave the case in your hands," said Walter.

"Very well, then. I'll ask for a postponement of one day to get witnesses of the case," and the young lawyer then added, "but you need not remain here. I can get bail for you."

The young lawyer proceeded to get a good man to go bail for him, and then asked for one day in which to procure the attendance of witnesses. The delay was granted, and then, late in the afternoon, Walter swore out a warrant for the arrest of Trainor for assault and battery.

The young lawyer, whose name was Campbell, held the warrant till about nine o'clock in the evening. He then hunted up Constable Wilson, gave him the warrant and said:

"Now let's see if you will be as strict in the performance of duty as you were last night."

"I'll show you that I am true to my duty every time," the constable replied as he took the warrant.

"All right. I'll be at the police station to see you bring him in."

Campbell and Walter then went to the station to await the superintendent's arrival.

In about an hour he came with the constable, exclaiming:

"This is an outrage! I can give any bail required. There was no need of—"

Walter burst into a laugh, and said:

"Let him have my cell, sergeant. I can recommend the plank bed as being very healthy."

Trainor gritted his teeth with rage, and protested.

"What's the matter with you?" the sergeant asked. "Do you think there is one law for Bayne and another for you?"

"Of course he does," put in Walter. "But he'll get sick of the mistake before I am done with him."

Trainor was given the same cell that Walter had on the previous night, and then the young fireman said to him:

"Good-night, superintendent! Pleasant dreams to you," and went away, accompanied by his lawyer and about a dozen firemen who had come to see him through.

The next morning the whole town was laughing at the superintendent having to occupy a cell in the station-house on complaint of the youth whom he had placed there the night before.

When the case came to trial Walter had a dozen of the mill girls on hand to swear that the superintendent struck the first blow by grabbing Walter's collar, and he was acquitted.

The superintendent was then tried, found guilty, and fined ten dollars and costs.

The firemen took Walter on their shoulders and bore him away in triumph.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRE AT THE MILL.

The superintendent of the Columbia Mills swore to be revenged on the young fireman, and he at once began his spite on the girls who testified in court against him. Four of them were discharged that afternoon, and six others were made to do work that was impossible for them to do well enough to pass inspection.

The four girls at once made an outcry, and the next day when the mill opened not one of the 120 girls employed in the place reported for work.

The superintendent and owners of the mill were dumfounded at the situation, for they had a very large order to fill, and would have to run on full time with a full force in order to do it.

The superintendent was soon told that the four girls would have to be taken back ere any of them would go to work.

"Tell 'em to come back then," said the owners.

"And the other six must be given their usual tasks," said the committee from the strikers.

"What's that?" the superintendent exclaimed. "Do you want to run the mill?"

"No, but we are going to stick to our agreement with each other to stand by any one unjustly dealt with."

The superintendent and the owners declined to submit and the committee went away.

The mill closed for the day, and a man was sent to New York for operatives to come out and take the places of the strikers.

In the meantime Walter Bayne was still looking for work,

but was unsuccessful. So many skilled hands were now out of work on account of the strike, that he had no show whatever, never having worked in a mill.

Meeting Dr. Williams again on the street, the man of medicine said to him:

"I can't understand why Mr. Bosworth told you that his wife was insane. Are you sure that he told you that?"

"Why, doctor, do you have any doubts about it? Surely you don't think that I told you a lie?"

"No; but people can be honestly mistaken sometimes."

"Yes, I know, but not in this case. Did you say anything to him about it?"

"Not a word; but I did to her. She was very much surprised. She says now that she will see you at all hazards, and that you must come to the hotel."

"I don't want to have any trouble with him, doctor."

"I don't think there will be any trouble. She seems to suspect him of having some motive in doing as he did, and wants to investigate it as far as she can."

"What had I better do?" Walter asked.

"See her, of course."

"But how?"

"You must be at some place where a messenger can find you. When Mr. Bosworth is away from the hotel she will send you word and you can meet her in the ladies' parlor of the hotel."

"I'll be at the hook and ladder company's headquarters all day to-morrow," said Walter, "and a messenger can find me there."

"I'll tell her that this evening then."

"If you like."

Walter shook hands with the doctor and passed on, and on the next block he felt some one tap him on the shoulder. On looking around he saw Mr. Elliott, the man to whom his father owed one more payment on his home.

"Walter," said Mr. Elliott, "I am glad I saw you. It will save me the trouble of writing. Tell your father that on yesterday I sold the mortgage on his place to another man, as I was in need of some ready money. It don't make any difference to whom he pays the money, you know."

"Who bought it?" Walter asked.

"Mr. Trainor of the Columbia Mills."

Walter turned pale.

"I am very sorry you did that, Mr. Elliott," he said. "Because you know as well as I do that he is our bitter enemy, and by selling him that mortgage you force either my mother or myself to deal with him."

"Pon my word, I never once thought of that, Walter," said Elliott. "It won't make any difference, though. If you don't wish to have anything to do with him bring me the money on the day before it is due, and I'll settle with him for you, and won't charge anything for services."

Walter knew that the money was not in the house by about one-half, so he simply said:

"Seeing what you have done, all I can say is, that I will tell my father what you have said to me. It is due in about two months, is it not?"

"Yes, two months and four days, I believe."

Walter went back to the hook and ladder headquarters to sit down and think. He was so utterly broken up by what Elliott told him that he did not know whether it was best to tell his father or not.

Whilst he was sitting there the clang of the great fire-bell startled him.

He sprang to duty at once, and in another minute the hook and ladder truck was dashing down the street in the direction of the fire, like a whirlwind.

The Columbia Mills were on fire, and intense excitement prevailed all over the lower part of the town.

Hook and Ladder No. 1 was the first on the ground, as usual, and rendered efficient service in saving thousands of dollars' worth of goods.

Superintendent Trainor was in and out working like a beaver to save some of the stock.

Upon the third floor, where Walter was received so warmly by the mill girls when he went there for work, the fire was raging like a furnace.

Walter saw Trainor going up there, and yelled to him to come back.

The half dazed man did not hear him, but kept on up.

A minute or two later there was a crash, as of something falling, and Walter made a dash up the stairs to see if any one was hurt.

"Good Lord!" he gasped as he looked around, and failed to see the superintendent. "It's the last of him. I must get out myself, or I may be too late."

He ran down one flight and was about to make the descent of the second one when something impelled him to run up once more and look for Trainor.

Half way up the stairs he felt a wriggling something rolling down against his legs.

It was Trainor, who had succumbed to the heat and smoke, and was utterly unconscious.

"I must get him out," said Walter, "though it will be hard work."

He took him up on his shoulders and staggered to a window.

"Ladder here," he yelled.

They hurried with the ladder, and Walter proceeded to climb out of the window, but he was so near strangled with smoke that he lost his grip and went crashing earthward with his burden.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE INVALID AND THE FIREMAN.

Strange as it may seem to the reader, when Walter Bayne lost his grip up at the second story window of the mill, he and the unconscious superintendent went rolling down the ladder like two logs.

Two of the firemen saw them coming and braced themselves to catch them. They succeeded, but the impetus sent all four rolling over on the ground.

They were bruised more or less by the fall and collision, but no bones were broken.

Walter was the second one on his feet, exclaiming:

"By George, but I thought I was a goner that time!"

"Are you hurt?" Chief Wyckoff asked of him.

"Not much—just a few bruises I believe."

"You had a close shave."

"Yes, but the superintendent had a closer shave than I did."

"Was it the superintendent that you brought out with you?"

"Yes. He is nearly done for, I guess, as he didn't know anything when I found him."

Trainor was removed to his home and his family physician called in.

He was pretty badly hurt, and the doctor said he would have to lie in bed a week at least.

Walter went home to supper and washed himself, and his mother dressed his wounds, or bruises, and then told her and his father what Mr. Elliott had told him.

"But I saved Mr. Trainor's life at the mill this afternoon," he added, "and I don't think, after that, that we have any reason to be afraid of him."

"How strange things do get mixed up sometimes," said Will Bayne as he heard the story. "Trainor bought that mortgage to get us in his power. He is a very vindictive man. He knew that my income had stopped and that we would not have the money with which to make the last payment."

"But what will he do now?" Mrs. Bayne asked.

"The Lord only knows," and the ex-fireman shook his head.

"Surely he won't turn us out when our boy has saved his life," she said.

"No one can tell."

"Can't we get somebody else to take the mortgage and hold it?" Walter asked.

"Ordinarily we could," his father replied. "But just now people know that we have no income and that we cannot even pay the interest on the amount."

"But the place is good for it," said Walter.

"Of course, but it would have to be sold to make it, and nobody cares to place himself where he would have to put us out doors to make his money. That's the way I look at it."

Walter saw the point and said:

"Well, if we can raise the money in any way we won't ask any favors of John Trainor."

"Of course not. But watch closely and see if Trainor is still your enemy."

Walter did not leave the house again that evening, as he preferred to lie down and rest after the hard work of the mill fire.

But the next day he went to the truck house to remain there all day, or at least till he was sent for to go to the hotel.

It was about eleven o'clock when a messenger came for him.

He hurried away and till he reached the hotel he turned neither to the right or left.

On entering the hotel he met Dr. Williams, who said to him:

"Go right up to the parlor. She is sitting in the big rocking-chair."

He went upstairs, and as he entered the ladies' parlor he saw a fair, pale-faced lady seated in a large arm-chair and well wrapped up.

He removed his hat, bowed and stood before her.

She looked up at him in silent admiration for a couple of minutes, and then said:

"I am glad to see you. It is hard for me to believe that you are only sixteen years old. Sit down and let me tell you how grateful I am to you for saving my life the other day."

"Please don't do that, ma'am," he said, "because I only did my duty as a fireman then."

"Yes, so you did, but I am none the less grateful on that account. But for your manly performance of duty I would not be alive to-day. Did you know that the detectives and the chief of the fire department have declared that the fire was the work of an incendiary?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have heard that," he replied.

"It is an awful crime to endanger the lives of people that way."

"It is, indeed."

"Mr. Bayne, I wish to ask you some questions about what happened when you took me out of my room to save me from a horrible death. Will you tell me all you know about it?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You met my husband in the corridor just a few steps from our room door. I heard his voice telling you to hurry out as the stairs was ablaze. Then you fell down, did you not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How came you to fall?"

"My feet were knocked from under me by your husband."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am as sure of it as I am that I am now sitting here before you," he answered.

"What did he do then?"

"He tore you from my arms and disappeared in the smoke in the corridor."

"Where did you find me next?"

"At the head of the stairs. I stumbled over you."

"And you took me up again and brought me out?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Did my husband ever say anything about it to you afterward?"

"Yes, ma'am. He came to the headquarters of our fire company and thanked me, thrust a purse in my hand and went away."

"What was in the purse?"

"One hundred dollars."

"Now tell me why you did not come to see me the other day?"

"I did call, but Mr. Bosworth met me at the head of the stairs, and said that I could not see you."

"He did?" and her eyes flashed as she asked the question.

"Yes, ma'am."

"What did he say?"

"I—I—don't think I ought to tell you that, ma'am."

"Tell me everything. I must hear all. What did he say?"

"He said that you were out of your head, and that if I attempted to see you it would be at the peril of my life."

She looked at the young fireman with her great brown eyes opened to their widest extent, whilst her already very pale face assumed an ashen hue.

"You went away after that," she said, "believing what he told you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I believed it till I told Dr. Williams about it. Then he told me that you were no more out of your head than he or I were."

"And he was right. The doctor tells me that your father was injured for life whilst trying to save life and property at a fire?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And that you are the only support of the family?"

"Yes, ma'am, but just now it is no support at all, as I am out of employment."

"What is your father's name?"

"William Bayne."

"And your mother's?"

"Mary Bayne."

"And yours?"

"Walter Bayne."

"And you have a little sister, have you not?"

"Yes, ma'am. Her name is Nellie, ten years old."

Mrs. Bosworth wrote down their names with a pencil, and then said:

"Please don't say anything about what I have said to you. Dr. Williams said enough to me to cause me to ask you the questions that you have just answered. If we never meet again in this world, rest assured that my father and mother excepted, my deepest gratitude goes out to you. I shall never cease to think of you as the brave young fireman—though but a boy in years—who saved my life after my

husband had left me to perish. You must go now, for my husband may return at any moment."

She extended her hand to him, and he took it, bowed low, and left the hotel as quietly as he had entered it.

## CHAPTER XI.

### "THROUGH FLAME AND SMOKE."

Out on the street Walter Bayne wondered why the invalid lady had asked him such pointed questions.

"There was no way of evading them," he said to himself. "I didn't know how much Dr. Williams had told her, so there was no chance for me to withhold anything. It may make trouble between them, but I can't help that. He had no business to lie to me in the way he did. If he had told me that he objected to my calling on his wife it would have been enough."

"Hello, Walter!" called a voice behind him, and looking around he saw Elliott, the real estate man.

"Hello," he returned.

"Did you tell your father about the transfer of that mortgage?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say?"

"He was very much worried about it."

"Well, he needn't be, I should think, since what occurred at the mill yesterday. But for you Trainor would not have been alive to-day."

"I don't think that he is the man to let gratitude interfere with business. Besides, we don't want to have anything to do with him. I understand that the owners of the mill say that I was the cause of the strike of the mill girls, and that they believe that if there had been no strike there would have been no fire. But if Mr. Trainor had not acted as he did there would have been no trouble."

"Well, I don't know anything about the merits of the quarrel between you and Mr. Trainor, but I will say that Mr. Trainor has sent me word to-day to sell the mortgage for him to some one else, as he does not wish to hold it."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and now you can have a chance to find some friend to take it up for you."

"So I can. Well, it's good news, and it comes through flame and smoke to us at home."

"Yes, so it does. It seems strange that you should be the means of saving the life of your worst enemy. Do you know that the detectives are looking for the incendiary who started the hotel fire the other day?"

"Yes, sir. I heard that they were."

"Do you think that the mill was set on fire by some of the strikers?"

"No, I don't. I can't be made to believe such a thing as that."

"Well, the owners claim that it was, anyhow. They were fully insured. Let me know if you find any one to buy this mortgage."

"Yes, sir. I think I know a friend who will take it up and hold it for us, and I'll see him to-night."

He parted from the real estate man and started toward home, as it was now near supper time.

On the way he overtook the chief of the fire department, to whom he said:

"Mr. Wyckoff, the last payment on the mortgage on our home will be due in two months—two hundred dollars—and we have but half the money with which to meet it. Do you

know of any one who will take and hold it for us for another year, so as to give us a chance to get ahead?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Give me his name, please."

"His name is Wyckoff. He'll give you a check for one hundred dollars to-morrow, so you can take up the mortgage at once."

Walter was staggered.

"I—I don't know how to thank you, sir."

"Don't worry about that, my boy. I have the money, and I also have a daughter whom I would not have had had you not saved her from a watery grave."

"But you will take the mortgage and—"

"No, I won't. You go and pay it off to-morrow, take it to your father and tell him to tear it."

"Then I'll make it a debt of honor, Mr. Wyckoff. Shake hands with me on that," and he extended his hand to the chief, who shook it heartily, saying:

"My debt of gratitude is greater than your debt of honor, my boy. Have you found any employment yet?"

"No, sir."

"Well, don't give up. You'll strike it after awhile. If you get in a tight place the firemen will give you a benefit."

On his way home Walter felt as happy as a bird.

"It will be good news to mother," he said, as he entered the house.

At the supper table he told his mother all about Trainor's and Mr. Wyckoff's action in regard to the mortgage.

She was so overjoyed that she burst into tears.

The ex-fireman drew a long breath of relief when he heard it.

"It has come to us through flame and smoke," he said. "I am glad our boy has become a fireman."

"Yes," said his wife. "We still have a home, even though we may starve in it."

"We are not going to starve, mother," said Walter. "I'll be sure to get work soon now."

"I may as well tell you that we have not a mouthful of food in the house for to-morrow, nor a cent of money with which to buy it."

"Is that so, mother?"

"Yes, it is just the truth."

"Why not use some of the money for the mortgage. It is not due for two months yet?"

"No. That mortgage must be paid to-morrow, and our home secured to us forever."

"Yes, save the home first. We won't starve. Catch some fish for breakfast. We can eat fish without bread."

"Yes, I'll go out and catch some to-night. The moon shines bright enough," and Walter prepared to go out on the rocks, where he had so often caught a mess of fish for a family meal.

Half an hour later his father saw him out on the big rock—at least he could see a dark form there which he took to be him.

He could not see his son catching any fish, for the distance was too great for him to see so far by moonlight. But a little while after he saw Walt go out there he saw another dark form crossing the plank that bridged the sluice between the two rocks.

"Somebody has joined him at fishing," said his father. "I wonder who it can be?"

Will Bayne gazed out at the two dark figures in the moonlight, and saw them standing side by side on the rock.

By and by he turned away his head and began talking with little Nellie, who had come into the room.

He was entertained some time by the bright little girl,

and then her mother called her out to the kitchen to do something for her.

Then he looked again out of the window to find that only one dark figure remained on the rock!

That one figure stood there a minute or so, and then started to recross the planks toward the river bank.

"Mary, Mary!" he called.

His wife ran in.

"A man has just left the rock on which Walter was fishing, and Walter is not in sight. Run out and see who he is."

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ATTACK ON THE ROCK.

Mary Bayne was a brave woman in every sense of the word. She did not hesitate a single moment after hearing her husband's words, but darted out of the house without even stopping to put on a bonnet or shawl.

Out through the front gate she sped, and then round the corner of the lot and toward the river bank.

She saw a man returning from the water's edge and running up to him, saw that he was a stranger.

"Who are you?" she demanded, clutching hold of his arm with a firm grasp.

The man did not make any reply, but tried to shake himself loose from her. She held on all the closer. Then he turned upon her and gave her a blow that sent her reeling backward till she fell all in a heap, with a thousand stars flashing before her eyes.

When she came to she was too much dazed for some minutes to exactly realize what had happened to her. But she gradually recalled the whole business, and then her heart almost paralyzed with fear for Walter. She arose, went down to the river's edge and made her way out to the rock where Walter had gone to fish on leaving the house.

There she saw Walter's pole lying on the rock, but nothing else.

Then she hurried back to the house and told her husband what had happened to her and what she had seen on the rock.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Will Bayne. "Something has happened to Walter. You must run to the police station and tell them what has happened. Go quick!"

She was so unnerved that she could scarcely walk, and as she left the house she grew weaker every moment.

When less than one hundred yards from the gate she sank down on the ground utterly overcome.

Everything was turning around with her, and she was on the verge of swooning when she heard Walter's voice say:

"Mother! Mother! What's the matter?" and the next moment felt herself lifted in his arms.

"Walter! Walter!" she gasped. "You are alive!"

"Yes, mother, but wet through and through. What were you doing out here in the night air and lying on the ground?"

"I was going to tell the police that you were in the river and—"

"Why, don't you know that I am as hard to drown as any fish in the river?"

"Oh, I am so glad you are safe again. Who was the man on the rock with you?"

"He was an acquaintance. Why do you ask?"

"Because when I asked him who he was he turned and knocked me down."

"What! Knocked you down!"

"Yes—knocked me senseless."

"My God!" Walter gasped. "What does it mean?"  
"Who is he?"

"I'll tell you when I see him to-morrow, mother," and then he led her into the house, where he told his father that he was all right save the ducking he had received.

"But how came you to fall into the water?" his father asked.

"Oh, that was an easy thing to do," replied Walter, laughing. "I'll try it over again, and see if I can't get a good mess of fish for your breakfast," and to avoid answering the questions which they were putting to him, he hastened away to the river to try his luck at fishing again.

Out of hearing of his parents, Walter talked to and reasoned with himself incessantly.

"He was slipping up on me when I happened to look around and saw him. Then he spoke pleasantly, and asked me what luck I was having. Something told me that he had followed me there for no good purpose. I thought maybe he had heard of my call at the hotel, and that he had come to see me about it. Lucky for me that I rose up to talk with him. When he began to question me about my visit to the hotel I saw that he had come for a fight, and there I was unarmed and at his mercy. At last, when he drew his dagger and struck at me, I slipped off the rock into the water and left him there all alone. He is the only man who ever made me 'take water,' and I was glad enough to do it. But I'll face him to-morrow and show him that I am able to avenge a blow given to my mother. He came there to kill me, I believe, and had I not slipped into the water, where he dared not follow me, he would have done so. I believe that he is the very same man who shot at me the other night, but what in thunder he wanted to do it for puzzles me. One day he gives me one hundred dollars for saving his wife from fire, and the next tries to shoot me. Then he told me a big lie about his wife being crazy, and told me I could not see her. Now he comes at me with a dagger. I'll be ready for him next time, or my name is not Walter Bayne!"

Walter reached the rock which he had so suddenly left an hour before, and pulled the plank away with him so that no one could again join him without his knowledge or consent.

Then he went to work and caught three very fine fish, with which he returned to the house.

"We have enough to give us two meals at least," he said to his mother, "and I am quite sure that I can manage to provide bread in some way."

Mrs. Bayne had retired, feeling very much prostrated over the shock of the blow she had received.

When she awoke the next morning both her eyes were in mourning, showing that she had received a very hard blow.

Walter's blood boiled with indignation when he saw her face, and he said:

"If you were struck by the man who was on the rock with me last night, mother, I'll make him pay dearly for it."

"Don't go and get into trouble about it, Walter," she said.

"I'll keep the law on my side," he remarked. "I'll go and attend to the mortgage first and bring it home. Then I'll go and see about that blow."

She gave him the hundred dollars which Bosworth had given him, and with that in his pocket he called at the mill where Wyckoff worked, and got the check which the fire chief had waiting for him.

With that he went to Elliott's office and said:

"I have the money for that mortgage. Let me have it," and he produced the check and money.

The transfer was made, and the real estate man said:

"You are entitled to the benefit of the discount, which is seven dollars," and handed that amount back to him.

"I am glad to hear that," said Walter, placing the money back into his pocket.

He hastened back home to place the canceled mortgage in his father's hands, and give his mother the seven dollars discount.

That done he saw them happier than at any time since the terrible mishap to his father.

Then he left the house to go in quest of Mr. Bosworth.

On the way uptown he met two of the Hook and Ladder boys.

"I say, fellows," he said to them, "a man tried to get away with me last night, and I had to take water because I had no weapons. I want to borrow a gun and call on him."

"I haven't any with me," said one of the two.

"Nor have I," said the other.

"Well, I'll tackle him without one, then."

"Who is it?"

"Never mind. I won't call any names," and he left them.

At the hotel he stood around till he saw Bosworth come downstairs, and then started toward him.

Bosworth saw him and turned pale as death, but quickly reached around to his pistol pocket for his weapon as Walter sprang at him like a tiger.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY.

Ere Walter could reach him Bosworth drew a knife and made a desperate lunge at him with it. But the young fireman parried the thrust, caught him by the wrist with his left hand, and dealt him a blow with the other that sent him reeling back against the bottom of the stairs.

It was done in about ten seconds, and then a half-dozen guests of the house ran up to separate them.

"Out of my way!" hissed Bosworth, flourishing his dagger menacingly. "I'll kill him! Out of my way!"

Seeing the dagger in his hand they gave him a wide berth, and he rushed at Walter again.

The horrified guests expected to see the young fireman slain there and then, whilst they were powerless to prevent it. But in another moment they saw the youth strike out from the shoulder and the dagger went flying toward the ceiling whilst its owner staggered backward and then went down in a heap.

Then the bystanders rushed in and secured both men to prevent any further collisions.

Bosworth was fairly dazed by the terrific blow he had received. Walter was strong, quick and indignant, and he had put all his force in the blow, which landed full between the man's eyes.

"What's it all about?" one full-bearded man asked.

"What do you mean by coming in here and attacking one of my guests?" the landlord asked.

"Your guest is a coward and a scoundrel, besides being a would-be assassin."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say—that your guest Bosworth tried to kill me last night with that very dagger."

"It is false!" exclaimed Bosworth. "You attacked me, and but for the dagger you would have murdered me!"

Walter was dumfounded at the unexpected accusation, and for the moment was unable to make any reply.

"Where did that occur?" one of the party asked, turning to Bosworth.

"Down on Main street."

"Ah?" ejaculated Walter. "I'll prove him to be a liar now. The moon was shining very bright last night, and I went out on the rocks in the river back of our house to catch some fish for breakfast this morning. To reach a big boulder I had to make a bridge with a plank some ten feet long. I was seated on that rock, when he came up behind me. The roaring of the water over the rocks drowned his footsteps, and had I not happened to look round he would have been able to kill me then and there. As it was, I sprang up and confronted him. After a few words he drew his blade and rushed at me. I saved myself by slipping off the rock and disappearing from his sight, and by dint of hard swimming caught on to rocks below. My father saw us both on the rock from his bedroom window, and when he missed one of the two dark figures there he sent my mother out to see what had happened. She ran out, met Bosworth coming away, took hold of his arm and demanded to know who he was. He brutally struck her to the ground, and ran away. She bears the marks of the blow in her face this morning. I came here unarmed to see him about it, and the moment he saw me he drew that dagger again. Turn him loose now and let me have a chance at the cowardly assassin!"

The young fireman's story, told in a very dramatic manner created a sensation among those who heard it.

"It is false in every particular," said Bosworth. "The young villain met me, and, after a few words, attacked me like tiger, and I defended myself so well that he took to his heels. He came here to-day to blackmail me."

"My father and mother can corroborate my story. Any man who knows my father would believe him against all the world," and Walter Bayne's face seemed to blaze with pride as he spoke, "and," he added, "no honest man will say that I ever told him a lie."

By this time a large crowd had gathered in the hotel. The proprietor undertook to put Walter out, but the crowd knew the brave young fireman, and believed his story as against the story of the man whom they did not know, and would not let him be put out.

Then the landlord sent for the police. They came, and the crowd had to retire from the hotel.

But they did not make any arrests.

Walter met some of the members of Hook and Ladder No. 1, and when they heard his story they insisted on his going before a justice and swearing out a warrant against Bosworth.

"I'd rather give him a good, old-fashioned thrashing," he said to them.

"But there is a law which says you shall not do that," said a young man in the party. "Don't get out from behind the law yourself. Swear out a warrant for his arrest, and you can land him in State's prison, where he belongs."

So he went before a justice and swore out a warrant, which was placed in a constable's hands for execution.

The officer went to the hotel to make the arrest, but Bosworth could not be found.

He waited there for him, and when night came on he was still there, but no Bosworth did he see.

"Guess he has skipped," said one of the Hook and Ladder boys, when he heard that he had not been seen.

"If he has," said Walter, "I am very sorry, for I want to have a chance at him for striking my mother."

"If he has skipped," said another, "it is an acknowledgment of the truth of your accusation against him."

"Yes, but it does not give me the satisfaction I want," replied Walter.

In the evening the chief of the fire department came to Walter, and taking him aside, said:

"That man ought to have been your best friend. What has passed between you to make him your enemy?"

"It is something singular," replied Walter, "and has puzzled me ever since it occurred," and he then related his first meeting with Bosworth on the day of the fire in the hotel.

"He tripped you up, seized his wife, and then left her where the fire was hottest?" the chief gasped in dumfounded amazement.

"Yes—I stumbled over her as I was making my way out and took her up again."

"Yes. He wore a big black mustache then, but when he came to see me in the evening his mustache was shaved off."

"Well, well! I wish I had known that sooner. Is that all you know about it?"

"I have a suspicion on my mind that he tried to kill me on the very night following the fire."

"How?"

"By shooting at me in the dark as I was going home."

"Why, I never heard of that."

"I didn't say anything about it, but it is known to Mr. Baker, who came very near stopping the bullet away over on the other side of the street, for he hollered over to know what I was shooting at. Then he came over to where I was, and I told him somebody had fired off a pistol almost in my face, and then took to his heels."

"Why have you kept that a secret till now?" Fire Chief Wyckoff asked.

"For my mother's sake. I knew how it would worry her."

"~~But~~ maybe you did right after all. I think I can see through the whole business now, Walter."

"Well, what is it?"

"You must keep it a profound secret. You know it has been found that the fire was an incendiary one?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am quite sure now that Bosworth was the incendiary."

"Oh, that can't be!" exclaimed Walter. "What object could a rich man like him have in setting the hotel on fire?"

"To kill his wife!" replied the chief.

Walter started as if stung.

He remembered the sweet face of the invalid lady, and wondered if anyone could be so fiendish as to want to harm even a hair of her head.

"Mr. Wyckoff," he said, after a silence of a minute or two, "I can't believe such a thing as that. How do you reason it out?"

"She is an invalid, and, therefore of great expense and anxiety to him. He set the hotel on fire to cover up his crime, locked his wife's room door and left her to her fate. On seeing you go to her rescue he rushed up, told you to hurry, tripped you up, snatched her out of your arms and dropped her where she would be sure to perish, and hastened to save himself. Luckily for her, you stumbled over her again and brought her safely out."

"But he came to me that very evening, and gave me a purse of \$100 as a token of gratitude for saving her life."

"That was simply a blind, my dear boy," replied the chief. "He is a rich man, and knew that people would wonder and make remarks if he did not do something of the kind. He cut off his mustache in the hope of deceiving you so that you could not recognize him. He undoubtedly shot at you for fear that you might tell about the tripping-up business. Then the attempt on you last night makes that as plain as a nose on a man's face."

"I can hardly believe it, chief," said Walter.

"How have you accounted for the two attempts to kill you, then?"

"I have never thought that he was the one who shot at me

till to-day, and the attempt last night I attributed to his having heard that I went to the hotel to see his wife after he had told me that I should not do so."

"Did he tell you not to see her?"

"Oh, yes," and then Walter related the incident of the meeting at the top of the stairs, when Bosworth told him that Mrs. Bosworth was insane, and that he should not see her.

"There! He did not want to say anything to her to arouse her suspicions, or to have her ask you any questions. Did she ask you any questions about the fire when you did see her?"

"Yes, and I am sure that she suspected that something was wrong."

"Well, then, that's why he made up his mind to settle you before any investigation could take place. With you out of the way, suspicion would not point in his direction. Walter, I am going to get at the bottom of this thing. I shall get a week's leave from the mill and give my whole time to looking into the thing. The detective who is engaged to ferret out the incendiary thinks one of the servants set fire to the place, but I am satisfied that he is wrong."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### A NARROW ESCAPE.

When Walter parted with the chief of the fire department on the evening of the encounter with Bosworth he was like one in a dream. It was hard for him to believe that the chief was right in his suspicions, and yet everything seemed to be pointing in that direction.

"But what in the world could he want to kill such a sweet little woman as his wife is for?" he asked himself a dozen times on the way home. "He is up to some kind of a game. It may be because she is an invalid that he wants to get rid of her, or he may want to get hold of some property. One thing is certain—he has done his best to fix me, and it's sheer good luck that I am alive to-night. I hope the chief will be able to get at the bottom of the mystery. His skipping as soon as he heard that I had sworn out a warrant for his arrest shows that he knows I have enough to make it hot for him."

Wyckoff went to the chief of police on leaving Walter, and told that official that Bosworth was the incendiary who had fired the hotel the week before.

The police official was astonished, and asked for particulars. Wyckoff gave him the whole story.

"You are right," he said, "but I fear he has made his escape from Mill Dale."

"But his wife is still here."

"We can't do anything with her on his account."

"Of course not, but her mail might be watched and—"

"Oh, there are many ways of getting at him. We'll run him down if it takes us ten years to do it."

"Well, I hope you'll get him," said the fire chief.

"Yes. I'll post every officer on the force with instructions to arrest him on sight."

The fire chief was about to leave the police headquarters when the firebell rang out an alarm of fire in the first district.

He hastened there with all his speed, and saw the brave Hook and Ladder boys when they came up.

The fire was in an old carriage shop, but it spread to a tenement house adjoining it, and the firemen worked hard to get the women and children out.

Walter Bayne was in and out of the tenement house at least a dozen times, bringing out someone at every trip.

But once he went in, and a minute or so later a pistol shot was heard.

"Did you hear that?" the foreman of the Mill Dale fire engine asked of the chief.

"Yes. Some pistol or gun left in there has exploded."

But Walter did not make his appearance again, and the chief became very uneasy about him.

The flames were roaring and crackling with savage heat and fury, and the firemen were suffering terribly.

"Who will go in and bring Bayne out?" the chief sang out.

The brave boys were appalled at the idea of going into such a fiery furnace as that, and looked at the chief as if to see if he was in earnest.

The chief saw that he had called for volunteers to go where they did not believe that he would dare go himself. He was a man of dauntless courage. The brave boy fireman had saved his child from death by drowning, at the risk of his own life, and now he was doubtless in need of help himself.

He dashed into the burning building himself, going through a sheet of flame to pass the door.

"He'll lose his life!" cried one.

"They are both lost!" cried another.

"No chance for 'em!" yelled a third.

Murmurs of horror were heard on all sides.

Seconds seemed minutes, and minutes appeared to draw their slow length into hours, when the chief suddenly burst out of the furnace, with the form of Walter Bayne in his arms!

"Bring them away!" cried the foreman of the hook and ladder, greatly excited.

Three or four firemen rushed forward and brought them away.

They were unconscious, and their clothing was on fire in several places.

The excitement was intense, and the police had hard work to keep the people back, so eager were they to see whether the two brave men were dead or alive.

They were taken up and carried home, and when Dr. Williams examined Walter Bayne he found a scalp wound made by a bullet on the left side of the top of his head.

It made an ugly-looking wound, but did not penetrate the skull. It had evidently stunned him, and that, with the suffocation resulting from the smoke, had rendered him unconscious.

By dint of hard work he succeeded in restoring consciousness to Walter, who looked around to see where he was the moment he opened his eyes.

"You are all right now, my boy," said Dr. Williams.

Walter raised a hand to feel of his bandaged head, when the doctor caught it.

"Just keep quiet now," the latter said, "and you will be all right in a little while."

"What's the matter?" Walter asked.

"You were hurt in the fire," replied the doctor.

"Who hurt me?"

"Something hit you on the head."

Again Walter raised a hand to his head, and this time he felt the bandage.

"Don't move the bandage, Walter," said his mother. "You have been badly hurt, and will have to take good care of yourself."

It was not so bad with Chief Wyckoff.

His unconsciousness had resulted from inhaling smoke and the intense heat to which he had been exposed.

He recovered consciousness soon after reaching his home, and save for the burns he had received was all right.

His burns were quite severe in two places, but he did not mind them as long as he had saved the life of the young fireman.

The next day Josie Wyckoff, the daughter of the fire chief, came over to the cottage to see how Walter was.

She was amazed at being told that Walter Bayne had been shot.

She ran up to the bedside, and, looking into his eyes, asked: "Who shot you, Walter?"

"I don't know," he replied. "The doctor says I have been shot, but I don't know anything about it. I remember feeling a blow on my head, and then I didn't know anything till they brought me home. They tell me your father is hurt, too."

"Yes, but not so much as you," said the girl. "He was burned in several places, and his clothes were ruined. But he is perfectly happy over having saved you, Walter."

"Yes, I owe him one for that. I suppose I would have been roasted."

"Well, you saved me, you know, and that put us all in your debt, and—"

"Oh, that wasn't fire. You and I both liked the bath we had. I'd like to take another swim with you."

She laughed and said:

"Well, I wouldn't like it, I am sure, at least not in such a dangerous place as that was."

She went back home to tell her father the news, and W. turned over and went to sleep.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CHIEF OF POLICE AND THE LADY.

On hearing that Dr. Williams had pronounced the wound on Walter's head a bullet wound, the chief of police called on him and asked about it.

"Yes," said the doctor, "it was made by a bullet and nothing else."

"I understand that a shot was heard in the burning building," said the official, "but that is the case in most fires where guns and pistols are among the things destroyed by fire. Does Bayne say that he saw anybody shoot at him?"

"No. He said that he remembers hearing the shot behind him, and of his falling to the floor, and beyond that he knows nothing more."

"Well, I'll set a detective to looking for some clew to it, though it looks as if it would be useless to do so."

"Yes, it would seem so."

The chief of police began an investigation to learn whether or not anyone was seen to leave the building after the pistol shot was heard.

He began with the firemen, asking every one who was present at the fire in turn. But none of them saw anybody come out of the burning building save the chief of the fire department when he brought Walter out.

Then he began to inquire of those who were in the rear of the house when it was burning, and learned that nobody had left the premises on that side after the pistol shot was heard.

"Then he must have perished in the fire," said the police official. "The fire was in full blast when the shot was fired, and he may have fallen a victim to it. I'll have the ashes raked over to see whether or not any charred bones could be found."

It required two days to cool the ashes so that men could work in them.

They found the charred bones of a child, also those of a grown person and a badly burned pistol.

Of course, identification of the bones was out of the ques-

tion, but the chief of the police had the ashes sifted most carefully till every little thing that would throw any light on the matter was carefully examined.

At last a diamond was found.

The heat had damaged it but very little.

"That's what I was looking for," said the chief, as he took the precious stone in his hand. "I am now satisfied that the man who fired that shot at Walter Bayne is dead, and that this was worn by him."

"Who was he?" a citizen asked.

"Wait a bit, and maybe I'll tell you."

He went back to his headquarters, and then prepared for a visit to Mrs. Bosworth, to whom he sent up his card at the hotel where she was living.

She was wrapped in shawls, and seated in an arm-chair when he was shown in.

"Madam," he said, making her a very profound bow, "I am the chief of police of this city, and have come to ask if you know where your husband is?"

"No," she replied, "I don't know where he is." "Come you know if this diamond is like the one he wore," and

"Handed her the diamond which had been fished out of the Ha of the late fire.

been took and looked at it.

with really cannot say," she replied, after a silence of some fish. tes. "I never saw the diamond he wore out of the set-

"I and would hardly know it. Why do you ask me that?"

"Because it was found in the ashes of the last fire."

"Was he present at that fire?"

"No one knows. We are trying to find out if he was."

"I have not seen him since the day he had the trouble with that young fireman. I don't think he has been in Mill Dale since that day."

"Did he leave the town that day?"

"I don't know. I have not seen him since that day."

"You cannot identify that diamond?"

"No, sir, not out of the setting, if it was his. Why do you think it is my husband's diamond?"

"Someone said that it resembled the one he wore, and I am trying to find out who was burned up in that fire night before last."

"I am quite sure that he was not in Mill Dale on that evening," said the invalid lady.

"Yet you cannot say where he was at that time?"

"No, not with any certainty."

"You don't believe that he has been lost in the fire, though?"

"No, I have no reason to think so," she replied.

"You do not seem to be in any way uneasy about him?"

"I am not of a very emotional nature," she said. "Yet I would be very sorry to hear of anyone dying such a horrible death. It must be the most painful death one can die. Can you tell me if young Bayne is out of danger? He saved my life once, you know, and hence I am very much interested in his welfare."

"Yes, so he did. He is a young hero. I believe the doctors have said that he was out of danger, though badly hurt."

"Ah, I am very glad to hear that. I was told yesterday that he was not expected to live."

"He will be out again in a week or so. He was hurt on the head and bruised in a few places. Firemen don't mind such things. They are used to them, you know."

The chief received back the diamond and stowed it away in his vest pocket. Taking up his hat, he turned to Mrs. Bosworth again, and asked:

"You are sure, are you, that this stone was not the one your husband wore?"

"No, I am not sure, for I cannot recognize it out of its setting. It may and yet may not have been his."

He made a profound bow to her and withdrew.

"She is a puzzle to me," said the chief to himself. "She doesn't seem to care two cents what has become of her husband. On the contrary, she is utterly indifferent about it."

On reaching his office the chief found a note on his desk, which read:

"Dear Chief.—Come and see me at once. Something to tell you.—Walter Bayne."

"I wonder what he wants," the chief said, looking at his watch. "I'll take the time to go and see him later in the evening."

When he called, the chief found the young fireman sitting up in bed, and well able to talk.

"I am glad to see you, chief," Walter said. "Since I've had my head to feel all right again, I've been thinking that the man who fired that shot at me from behind perished in the fire."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I made the escape from the very spot where the floor was sinking under me just a moment before, and as the shot came I heard a voice say in desperate tones:

"I am lost."

"Why have you not said anything about it before?"

"Because my head hurt me so that I could not think of everything that took place."

"Well, you want to do some more thinking. We have found the charred remains of a man in the ashes, and this diamond."

Bayne took the diamond, and looked at it.

"It looks like Bosworth's," he said.

"Yes, and we also found a revolver with the woodwork all burned away."

"Did you find a knife."

"No."

"He had a clasp-knife. See if you can find it, and that will settle the question as to whether he was Bosworth."

The chief went back to his quarters, and was there told by one of the firemen that a gunsmith had repaired a revolver for Bosworth a few days before, and that he thought he would know if the one found in the ashes was the same one or not.

"Take it to him, then," said the chief.

A few minutes later a porter from the hotel dashed into the office and handed him a note.

It was addressed to the chief of police, and the handwriting, was that of a lady. He opened the note and read:

"Mrs. Bosworth would be pleased to have the chief of police call at the hotel at his earliest convenience on very important business."

That was all, but in view of what the chief heard her say that day he was moved to hurry off to the hotel at once.

On arriving at the hotel the chief was shown up to the ladies' parlor, where he found the lady waiting for him.

She was white as a sheet, and her eyes flashed fire.

"Chief," she said, the moment he entered. "Arrest my husband and I will pay you \$1,000."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE MYSTERY OF BOSWORTH'S FATE.

The chief of police was dumfounded at her words. He gazed at her in silence for a minute or two, as if to give her a chance to say more. But she said nothing. She looked him full in the face in an expectant sort of way till he said:

"I have ordered the men on duty to look out for him. We want him for the attempt on the life of young Bayne."

"Tell the men that one thousand dollars will be paid to the one who arrests him," she added.

He bowed and said:

"Your wishes shall be attended to, madam."

"And when he is arrested send me word at once, so that I may see him."

He again bowed, and then asked:

"Will you be so kind as to inform me why you wish to have him arrested?"

"That you shall hear when I see him under arrest," she replied. "I will be responsible for the arrest, and my responsibility is worth a good deal, sir. I have a fortune in my own right."

The chief was about to leave her presence when she said:

"Keep my name in the background, please. Simply say the reward will be paid."

"Yes, madam," and he turned and left the parlor, wondering what had happened since he had seen the lady that morning.

Once more out on the street the chief said to himself:

"Something has happened to arouse the ire of the lady. Her eyes were blazing with wrath when she spoke to me. She has heard something or made some discovery since I saw her this morning. Can it be possible that she and her husband have separated? If so, it is of very recent date. Hello!"

He had run up against Dr. Williams, and the collision came near sending the man of medicine to the gutter.

"I beg your pardon, doctor," said the chief. "I didn't see you, though you feel like a very solid individual."

"Well, I flatter myself that I am," returned the doctor, laughing. "By the way, I have been twice to your office to see you, and each time you had just gone out. Mrs. Bosworth at the hotel wants to see you."

"I have just been to see her," said the chief.

"Oh, you have, eh? She told you what she wanted?"

"Yes."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to do as she says."

"Did she tell you why she wanted him arrested?"

"No," and the chief looked hard at him as if waiting for him to say something more.

But the old doctor did not, and the chief asked:

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Perhaps I do professionally."

"Have they separated?"

"I think they have."

"It is a mystery to me."

"Yes, there is a good deal of mystery connected with it," remarked the doctor.

"Well, maybe his arrest will clear it all up. I hate mystery."

"Most people like it, I think," the doctor said, as he walked away.

The chief returned to his office, and sat down to think over the situation.

"She means business," he said, "and it's plain that he is in a bad way if the police should get hold of him. I only wish the lad had told me what she had against him. I suppose I'll find out all about it when he is arrested. Lord, how her eyes flashed when she told me to arrest him! She is a woman who can hate with a vengeance."

Just as he was about to leave his office, the fireman who had taken the pistol found in the fire to the gunsmith came in and said:

"The gunsmith says that he will examine the pistol to-morrow and report to you."

"Very well," said the chief, "that will do just as well."

The fireman stood around as if he had something on his mind that troubled him.

At last he said:

"I've got something to tell you, chief, but you must not give me away."

"Eh? What? No, I won't give you away. What is it?"

"The boys of the Hook and Ladder No. 1 are going to hang Bosworth if they can catch him."

"Jerusalem! Lynch law here in Mill Dale!"

"Yes, sir. They say he has now made two attempts on his life—Walter Bayne's—and now they are going to make one on his. If they catch him they'll hang him sure."

"Well, well," ejaculated the chief. "Are all of them in that racket?"

"The last one of them, sir; I told them that it was wrong, and they told me that it made no difference, so I thought that if you said a few words to them they might listen to you."

"Yes, yes, you are right. I will see them to-morrow evening."

"Don't give me away now," cautioned the fireman.

"No danger of that," said the chief. "The boys must not do any such thing as that, though. It would disgrace our little city. I'll drop in at their quarters to-morrow evening. Do you give them a quiet little talk about such foolishness?"

The fireman went away, and the chief of police shes. She walked leisurely down the street toward his home.

"It seems that this is a very unhealthy place for worth," said the chief to himself as he strolled along a cigar. "His wife offers a thousand dollars for and the firemen of Hook and Ladder No. 1 offer to han, as soon as he puts in an appearance. Really, I would not blame him if he gives the place a wide berth. It is a dangerous ground for him."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SUNSHINE COMES THROUGH FLAME AND SMOKE.

The next morning after he had been told that the members of Hook and Ladder No. 1 were looking for Bosworth, the chief of police paid a visit to the home of the Baynes, and was received with a warm welcome.

"Have you heard the news, Walter?" he turned to the young fireman and asked, as soon as he was seated by the bedside.

"I don't know that I have," he replied. "What is it?"

"The members of Hook and Ladder No. 1 have been looking for Bosworth to lynch him."

"Well, I hadn't heard of that," said Walter. "I hope they won't find him then."

"Ah! That's just what I wanted to hear you say," said the chief. "It would be a stain on the good name of our little city. I want you to write a note to the foreman of the company asking him to put a stop to such foolish talk and work. I'll take it to him myself this evening. Such a thing as a lynching in Mill Dale would ruin the good name of the place for twenty years to come."

"Of course it would. I'll write the letter at once."

His mother brought him pen, ink, and paper, and in a few minutes he wrote the note suggested by the chief of police, and gave it to him.

"I hope you will soon be able to be out again, Walter," the chief said as he placed the note away in his pocket.

"Thanks. I'll be out again in a few days now. The doctor said I am getting well too fast to suit him."

"Why so?"

"Oh, he charges a dollar a visit," and Walter laughed. "He will have to wait a long time for his dollar, though."

"No, he won't," said the chief. "The city council will vote

money to pay your bills during the time you are laid up from your hurts."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I heard some of the councilmen talking about it last night. They are also going to vote \$25 a month to your father as long as he remains disabled."

"Oh, mother, do you hear that?" Walter cried. "There'll be no danger of our starving now!"

Mrs. Bayne was so overjoyed that she ran into her husband's room to tell him about it.

The news sent a thrill through the entire household.

"Are you sure it will be done?" Mrs. Bayne asked.

"Oh, yes. Every one of the councilmen have expressed a willingness to do it. The fact that a father and son, the breadwinners of a family, are laid up from wounds received in trying to save property and life, has touched their sense of justice. The council will meet to-night, and I haven't a doubt that you will receive news before ten o'clock."

"Oh, it gives me a new lease of life and hope," said Mrs. Bayne. "I had begun to think the sunshine would never come again, but it's breaking through the clouds now."

"Has it been hard lines with you?" the chief asked.

"Hard lines!" exclaimed Walter. "Why, chief, there have been times when we had nothing to eat save what I caught with my hook in the river. Not even bread to go with the fish."

"Is that true, Mrs. Bayne?" the chief asked, turning to the mother with an expression of astonishment on his face.

"Yes, it is true."

"And did not Will Bayne save anything out of his wages at all?"

"Yes, but it went to pay the quarterly installments on this house. It is all paid for now, thank the good Lord."

"Ah! You have a home all your own. See here now. Here's ten dollars. It's a loan to be paid back when you can do it without feeling it," and he placed the bill in the hand of Mrs. Bayne. "The men in this family are heroes, and the women must have the same stuff in them, too. No, don't go to thanking me for it. I'd have done it long ago had I suspected how you were fixed. Just hustle around and get your boy on his pins again and that'll be all right. He'll get a good place yet, and I can afford to wait till he does."

The chief picked up his hat and made his escape from the house without giving Mrs. Bayne a chance to say a word of thanks to him.

"He is one of the best fellows in the world, mother," said Walter. "We have a good many friends in Mill Dale, only they don't know how hard pushed we are."

"But we didn't want them to find that out, Walter," his mother said.

"We have nothing to be ashamed of under the circumstances."

"No, and I am glad of that."

A rap on the door startled Mrs. Bayne, and when she opened it she found a lad there with a letter in his hand.

"This is for Mr. Walter Bayne," said the lad, handing her the letter.

She took it and the lad ran away ere she could get a chance to ask if any answer was required.

"It's a letter for you, Walter," Mrs. Bayne said, returning to the room and handing him the letter.

"Who can it be from, I wonder," said Walter, opening and reading:

"Dear Sir.—As soon as you are recovered from your wounds call at our store, where a place at fifty dollars per month awaits your acceptance."

"Very truly,

"Bidwell & Jones."

"See there, mother," he said, his eyes filling with tears. "That comes through flame and smoke, too!"

He handed her the letter.

She read it and carried it to her husband in the next room.

"Yes," said Will Bayne. "He saved one of the Bidwell children at the last fire. I saw it in the papers. She was there on a visit. Bidwell & Jones is one of the best firms in the city. Oh, we are not going to starve yet awhile."

"No," said Walter, "for I am going to get right up and go to work."

"Not till the doctor tells you to," said his mother.

They were all very happy that day, and late in the afternoon one of the firemen came in and said that all the firemen in the city were going to give a grand benefit ball for Will and Walter Bayne.

"Here it comes, through flame and smoke again," said Walter, as he grasped the young fireman's hand and shook it warmly.

"I'd like to know who has been through more flames and smoke than you and your father," the visitor said.

"Yes, and all our misfortunes have come through flame and smoke, and now our friends are remembering us. I am glad to be a member of Hook and Ladder No. 1."

"So am I," said the visitor.

"Have they heard anything from Bosworth yet?" Walter asked.

"No, not yet, but if he turns up the fire boys are going to give him a circus."

"So I heard," said Walter. "But look here. The man who takes part in the lynching of Bosworth is not the friend of Walter Bayne."

"What's the matter now?"

"A lynching in Mill Dale would be the everlasting disgrace of the city and all connected with it. I want my friends to drop that thing right where it is. Let the law take its course."

The visitor was a little surprised at the tone of his remarks.

"I thought you were particularly anxious to have him punished?" he said.

"So I am. But I don't want my friends to disgrace themselves and the city whilst punishing him. That's all. The chief of police has been here to see me about it. He'll be at the Hook and Ladder headquarters to-night to see the boys about it."

That evening the chief went to the firemen's quarters and talked with the boys and read Walter's letter to them.

They cheered him and said that if they caught Bosworth they would place him on a rail and ride him down to police headquarters and have him locked up.

A messenger came in to say that the city council had just voted \$25 a month to Will Bayne in recognition of his gallant services in saving life and property in Mill Dale; and also a sum to pay the entire expense of board, nursing and doctor's bills incurred in consequence of hurts received by Walter Bayne in the discharge of his duty as a fireman.

When the brave firemen heard that they gave a shout that nearly raised the roof off their quarters.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE REVELATIONS OF THE WIDOW.

On the day following the incidents related in the preceding chapter, the gunsmith who had been examining the revolver found in the ashes of the last conflagration went to the chief of police to make his report.

"A few days before the fire," he said to the chief, "Mr. Bos-

worth came to me with a revolver and asked me if I could put a stronger spring in the lock, as the one he had frequently failed to explode the cap. I told him that I believed I could, as I had a great variety of such things in my shop. He left the weapon with me, and I repaired it as ordered. I am in the habit of placing a mark on every firearm that comes into my shop for repairs or work of any description. That mark is three little round holes about the size of pin heads made by a hard-pointed punch and a sharp blow of a hammer. Well, I put that mark on Bosworth's pistol, and I have found them there on this one found in the ashes."

"But have you not placed that same mark on scores of other revolvers in Mill Dale?" the chief asked.

"Yes. But on his revolver I found another mark which I have never seen on any other—a filed cross under the bottom of the long barrel, about an inch from the muzzle."

"Do you find that mark on the burnt one?"

"Yes, very distinctly."

"And so you are sure that it is the one that you repaired for Bosworth?"

"I am positive that it is the one," he replied.

"See here, chief," said an officer, coming in. "Here is a knife which has just been found in the ashes where the pistol was found two days ago."

The chief took the burnt blades in his hands and looked at them.

"That was a clasp-knife," said the gunsmith the moment he saw the blade. "I have repaired many a one."

"You are sure of that, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know that this settles the question of the fate of Bosworth?" the chief asked.

"No, I did not," said the gunsmith.

"Well, it does, and I am not sorry for it. It has been puzzling me for several days. It settles the question beyond a doubt."

"Did he have a clasp knife with him?"

"Yes. He drew it on Walter Bayne the day they had the fracas in the hotel. Walter never forgot the knife."

"Then I should say he was the man whose bones were found in the ashes."

"Undoubtedly."

When the gunsmith went away the chief of police sat down to think over the situation, which had now changed somewhat.

"Mrs. Bosworth will have to be informed of it," he said to himself, "and I am not sure that it is going to be a pleasant task to do it. The bones of the dead man have all been gathered up—such as could be—and placed in a box. She will have to say what must be done with them."

The chief called at the hotel and sent up his card to the lady. She met him in the parlor, looking better than at any time since her arrival at the house.

"Madam," he said, "I have an unpleasant duty to perform. The fact has been fully established that your husband did perish in the fire the other day."

She turned slightly paler if possible, and sat down in an armchair.

"How has that fact been established?" she asked.

"A knife and pistol, belonging to him, have been identified by the gunsmith, who repaired the firearms for him only a few days before the fire."

"I have no longer a shadow of doubt about it, madam," said the chief, "and now have to ask what disposition you wish made of the charred remains."

"Have them buried decently, and send the bill to me."

"Have you no other orders to give?"

"No, sir."

He arose and was about to leave, when she asked him to sit down again.

He did so, and she said:

"I think it proper to make an explanation to you. I have been married seven years, and have a very large fortune in my own right. I never had a child, and two years ago my husband induced me to make a will, leaving him the bulk of my fortune. Soon after that my health began to decline, and we traveled to various sections, hoping the change of air and water would benefit me. I grew worse all the time, until I was a mere wreck."

"At last we came here, and the fire at the hotel occurred. For the first time I suspected my husband of trying to encompass my death, and after hearing young Bayne's story I was sure of it. I began to investigate and soon discovered that he was slowly drugging me to death. When I made that discovery and obtained the fullest proof of it I offered the reward for his arrest. But in his eagerness to put young Bayne out of the way as a witness he has lost his own life. My health has steadily improved since the day of the last fire, and not the least doubt remains that I will fully recover my health. You can now fully understand why I offered that reward, and you are at liberty to give the explanation to the public if you think it necessary to do so. I shall remain here till my health is fully restored, as I have received so much sympathy from the guests of this house."

"Madam, your story astounds me!" said the chief.

"I am not surprised at that," she replied. "It utterly ~~utterly~~ founded me when I discovered the truth. I have not the least regret for the fate that overtook him. The shame of being the widow of such a man is mine, but I can bear it now that I am free from him."

"Let me express the hope that you may entirely recover your health, and that you may live to be as happy as you could wish to be."

"Thanks, sir. I wish you all the happiness one can enjoy in this life."

The chief went away to give orders for the burial of Bosworth's remains in accordance with her instructions.

Her story soon reached the public and created an immense sensation, and as Walter Bayne was more or less connected with it he came in for a vast amount of congratulations.

A few days later found Walter at work in the store of Bidwell & Jones, having recovered sufficiently to enable him to attend to business.

In the store as a clerk was a young man whose father was one of the heavy stockholders of the mill of which Mr. Trainor had been superintendent. His father was very bitter against Walter, believing that Walter had caused the strike and that the strikers set the mill on fire.

"Are you going to work here?" the young man asked him.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then I'll leave!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE YOUNG DUDE'S MISTAKE.

Walter did not know who the young man was, and was too surprised at his words to ask him what he meant at the moment. The young man left him immediately, and went into the front office of the store, and Walter went about his duties, thinking it strange that the clerk should have spoken to him in the way he did.

Meeting another one of the clerks a few minutes later he asked:

"Who is the young man with the brown mustache?"

"Oh, that's 'Dolph Widmer. His father owned about a third of the mill where you saved Trainor from a roasting."

"Oh, yes," and Walter looked through the glass partition of the office and saw young Widmer engaged in conversation with the head of the house.

"You don't know him?" the clerk asked.

"No."

"He's the dude of the establishment, and has a great pull with the boss."

"Well, he has just told me if I stayed here he was going to leave."

"Did he tell you that?"

"Yes, and I am going to make him explain what he means."

"Oh, I can tell you what he means easily enough," said the clerk. "I heard him talking about it last night. He says that you were the cause of the mill being fired, and that you were a low fellow whom he will not associate with."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't think he will give me such an explanation as that. I am going right in there and ask him about it."

"No—no! don't go in there, but wait till he comes out."

Walter waited till young Widmer came out, and then stepped up to him and asked:

"What did you mean by what you said to me just before you went into the office?"

"I meant just what I said—that you and I can't work in the same house."

"An insult is implied in that remark," said Walter, very coolly, "and if you don't apologize I'll make you."

"You make me apologize!" exclaimed the young man. "Take that and get out of my way."

He aimed a blow at his face which Walter parried, and the next moment was knocked all in a heap by the young fireman.

He arose to his feet in a half-dazed condition, and made for Walter again. This time Walter put in a blow right under his left eye that sent him sprawling on the floor.

The proprietor and two of the bookkeepers came running out of the office to separate them.

"What does this mean?" Mr. Bidwell demanded in very angry tones.

"It means that I am giving him a thrashing for insulting me," replied Walter.

"Well, let him alone."

"I beg pardon," said Walter. "I am going to make him apologize."

"But I won't have any fighting here in the store," said the proprietor of the place.

"You may discharge me, sir, if you like," replied Walter. "But I didn't part with my manhood when I entered your employ," and he sprang at young Widmer again, and exclaimed:

"Do you apologize?"

"Yes," replied the young man, who had had enough of the sturdy young fireman.

"All right, then. You want to be careful how you insult your betters hereafter."

"Who struck the first blow?" Mr. Bidwell asked.

"He struck at me first," replied Walter. "I parried, and gave him one. He met me awhile ago, and asked me if I was going to stay here, and on my answering that I was, he said that in that case he would leave. When he came out of the office I asked him for an explanation or an apology, and he struck at me. I never take an insult from any man. My manhood is my own, and though you are my employer, you nor

no other man can insult me with impunity. Now, am I to leave or not?"

"No, sir. I honor a man who takes care of his manhood," said Mr. Bidwell.

"Then I'll leave," said young Widmer.

"You can get the amount due you for services in the office there," dryly returned the merchant. "I cannot allow you or any other man to dictate to me whom I shall employ."

The young man went into the office and got his pay, after which he came out and proceeded to put on his coat and hat.

As he passed Walter he said:

"I'll see you again about this."

"I hope you will, but don't forget that you have apologized to me for the insult you gave."

And Walter spoke loud enough for all the clerks to hear.

The affair created quite a sensation, and in a few days a reporter got hold of it and put it in his paper.

The Widmers were a very aristocratic family, and had very great influence in Mill Dale. They began to use that influence to injure the good name of the young fireman, characterizing him as a young bully, who delighted in nothing so much as using his brute strength on those who were above him socially.

Walter bore it all very patiently, and pursued the even tenor of his way.

Some time after the fracas in the store Walter was returning home when he overtook Mr. Wyckoff, the chief of the fire department.

"Walter," said the chief, "I am going to resign my place as chief."

"The deuce you are?"

"Yes. I am going to take the superintendency of the new mill that goes into operation next month."

"Oh, have you secured that position?"

"Yes, with the understanding that I resign from the fire department. They claim that a fire is liable to draw me away from the mill at any time and keep me out nearly a whole day."

"Yes, so it would. Well, I am glad you have gone up higher. It will be better pay, and will enable you to get rich in a few years."

"It is a better position all round," returned the chief. "But what I wanted to see you about is this: I want the position of chief of the department to remain with Hook and Ladder No. 1, and you are the one to take it."

"What! Me be chief of the fire department?" Walter exclaimed in utter amazement.

"Yes. There is no restriction as to age. You are as competent for the position as anyone I know."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE BOY FIREMAN IS MADE CHIEF.

A few days later Chief Wyckoff resigned his position, and another election was ordered to be held in ten days for the purpose of electing his successor.

Every fire company in Mill Dale at once nominated a favorite member for the position.

When all the engine companies had put up their men, the members of Hook and Ladder No. 1 met and put up the name of Walter Bayne.

When the votes were counted out, Walter had three to one, and was elected by a handsome majority over all three of his opponents combined.

The next morning after the election of chief, a carriage drove up to the door of the Bayne cottage, and a very hand-

some-looking lady alighted. Mrs. Bayne met her at the door and invited her into the house.

"I am Mrs. Bosworth," said the visitor, "and I have come to pay my respects to the parents of the young hero who saved my life."

Mrs. Bayne's heart was touched. She threw open her arms and clasped the lady to her heart, whilst tears of joy coursed down her cheeks.

"Come and see his father," said the proud mother, leading the way into the room where Will Bayne lay on his bed.

"This is Mrs. Bosworth, Will," she said.

Before Mrs. Bosworth left the cottage it was understood that Will Bayne was to be sent to one of the great institutions in New York at her expense, and kept there till he was either cured or pronounced incurable.

As for little Nellie, she was to have the best education that money could procure for her, and an income was settled upon her, the principal of which was to be given her when she should become of age.

When Walter came home to dinner and heard what the rich lady had done, he was so overjoyed that he could not eat. His happiness satisfied his appetite.

Time wore on and the new mill was finished. Ex-Fire Chief Wyckoff entered upon his duties as superintendent, and Walter Bayne took charge of the fire department of the city of Mill Dale. Dolph Widmer and two cousins of his resigned from the fire company to which they belonged, saying they would not serve under the boy fireman.

Walter laughed and said they were acting more like boys than ever he did, and the people thought so, too.

At last the time came for Will Bayne to be sent to New York, and two good men were sent along with him to take care of him. Nellie was sent to school, and the cottage was enlarged and refurnished at the expense of Mrs. Bosworth.

"By the way," said Mrs. Bosworth, one day to our hero, "I am thinking about building a mill here, and I want you to take charge of it for me."

"But I don't know anything about the mill business," he said.

"But you can learn. You are of that age when it's easy to learn anything. I am going to settle down in Mill Dale, and I want you to take charge of all the property I shall buy here. It will pay you more than any other business you can engage in."

"I shall never refuse to do anything you may ask of me, Mrs. Bosworth," he replied. "You have placed us all under such deep obligations that were you to tell me to jump off the top of this hotel I believe I would do it."

"I shall hold you to that pledge—that you will never refuse me anything I may ask of you," she said, "if you mean what you say."

"I do mean it," he said. "Whatever you may ask of me I will do, because I am sure that you will never ask of me anything that is not right."

"Certainly not; but don't forget what you have said."

"I won't forget it."

"Have you heard from your father lately?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. Mother had a letter from him this morning, saying that he believed he was improving."

"Does he have hopes of ever being able to walk again?"

"Oh, yes. He has never lost that hope."

"Well, when I see him walking about I am sure I shall be the happiest woman in the world."

"Except my mother," said Walter.

"Yes, maybe she would be happier than I, but I am sure I would be a very happy individual."

Clang! Clang! Clang!

"Excuse me, please," exclaimed Walter, as the tones of the

great fire-bell rang out through the town, and the next moment he was dashing down the stairs of the hotel a half dozen steps at a time.

It was the first fire that had occurred since his election as chief of the fire department.

He dashed through the streets to the fire, which was down in the third district in a machine shop.

This was the first time he ever ran to a fire without first running to his company quarters to go with the truck.

But now he had the whole department to look after, and he made direct for the scene of conflagration.

He reached there just as Hook and Ladder No. 1 rolled up to the spot.

"There's nothing for the hook and ladder to do, boys," he sang out to them. Then, turning to the engine company on his right, he said:

"Throw on the water as fast as you can, and look out for that building over there on the right."

The hook and ladder boys joined in with the engine companies and did heroic work in keeping the flames confined to the machine shop.

Once it looked as though the adjoining house would catch fire, and but for the watchfulness of the young chief it, too, would have gone down in ashes.

But Walter was here and there and everywhere on the lookout for threatened points.

Suddenly it looked as though a frame cottage in the rear of the machine shop would catch on fire, and Walter ordered one of the hosemen to turn a stream of water on the side of the house.

Twice the roof caught fire, and each time did he order the firemen to pour a stream of water upon it.

Had he not kept two streams constantly running on the machine shop the fire would have been so hot that a dozen streams could not have saved the cottage.

Steadily and inch by inch he fought the fire till at last he had it under control so that it did not get beyond the machine shop itself, thought that structure proved a total loss.

Walter had proved himself capable of the position given him, and favorable comment of his handling of the fire department was heard on all sides.

Time rolled on, and Mrs. Bosworth, true to her word, purchased a vast amount of property in the thriving little city, and gave Walter the management of it.

He had to give up his position of clerk with the house of Bidwell & Jones, and open an office where he could attend to the business of the Bosworth estate.

Two years after receiving the injury to his spine ~~WILLY~~ <sup>WILLY</sup> came back home completely cured, thanks to the liberality of the generous widow.

She made him superintendent of the largest mill in Mill Dale, and little Nellie was sent to a first-class boarding-school, where she would be sure of having all the attention paid her that the richest girls of the land received.

Walter was now on the highway to prosperity, and twice, when he tried to resign the position of chief of the fire department, the brave firemen re-elected him, and insisted on his remaining their head.

"You are the youngest fire chief we have any knowledge of," said the foreman of Hook and Ladder No. 1, "and we are anxious to keep you there as an example to the young men of Mill Dale. As we drop off the young men must take our places, and we want a record for them to strive to excel."

So he had to hold on to the place, in spite of his efforts to get rid of it.

Will Bayne, his father, dared not re-enter the service again. His physician forbade it; but they elected him an honorary

member, and he never failed to meet with the boys on their regular evenings once a week.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE WIDOW'S REQUEST.

Time rolled on, and the youth who was a fireman at sixteen was still a fireman at twenty-one, and considered a veteran.

On his twenty-first birthday he resigned the position of chief of the fire department, and re-entered the ranks of Hook and Ladder No. 1 as a private.

All the firemen protested.

"No," he said, firmly, "I won't take it again. There are other young men among the firemen of Mill Dale who deserve promotion by reason of gallant service. Give them a show. Let them see that valor is sure to be rewarded. There are a dozen or more youths who have saved lives from the flames. Elect one of them chief and thus encourage the boys."

"That is the most sensible advice I've heard for years," said the mayor, "and I hope the firemen of Mill Dale will follow it in both letter and spirit."

Quick to respond to the suggestion of the ex-chief, the members of ~~the~~ and Ladder No. 1 nominated Gus Trainor, a youth of nineteen, who had saved four lives at fires, for the position.

He was a son of Mr. Trainor, the mill superintendent, who was once a bitter enemy of Walter's.

Two other young men, who were yet under twenty-one years of age, and who had saved lives at conflagrations, were put up as candidates, and a general rivalry ensued.

Gus was elected, and a hearty support was given him after he took the office.

Only a few weeks after he returned to the ranks as a private Walter was called up out of bed by the ringing of the huge fire-bell.

He was quick to respond, and reached the hook and ladder house just as the truck was leaving.

The boys gave him a cheer of welcome as he seized hold of the rope and darted off with them.

The main hotel of the city was on fire, and the guests, suddenly awakened from sound slumbers, were running here and there, blinded by smoke which filled the corridors, in vain endeavors to get out of danger.

Walter Bayne was horrified when he reached the spot and found the big hotel wrapt in flames, and remembered that Mrs. Bosworth's suit of rooms were on the second floor.

His first thought was of her, and he dashed into the burning building and darted up the flight of stairs to her apartments.

He could have reached the door blindfolded, and even he might as well have been blindfolded, for he was forced by the smoke to shut his eyes tightly.

He reached the door, and found it locked.

Throwing himself against it with all his weight, he burst it open, and found the widow but half dressed, and so thoroughly frightened that she did not know what to do.

"Oh, Walter!" she cried. "Save me! Save me from the fire!"

"Keep cool, then, and hurry on a dress," he returned. "I will save you or die with you."

She hastily threw on a wrapper, and turning to him said:

"I am ready now."

"Where are your jewels?" he asked.

She ran to the bureau, and took therefrom a jewel-case.

"Hold to it," he said, and then running to the bed, he

snatched a pair of blankets off of it, spread them on the floor and said:

"Lie down on those, and let me roll you up in them."

She did so, and he rolled her over and over till the length of two blankets were wrapped around her.

Then he took her up in his arms and dashed through the corridors now black with smoke and passed down the stairs and out to the street with her.

When he reached the street with her the blankets were on fire in three places, and the hosemen dashed a stream of water over her.

Mrs. Bosworth was taken to a private house near by, where she was unrolled from the blankets, half dead from suffocation. All her wardrobe was lost in the fire, but she had been wise enough to have it insured for two-thirds its value.

Nearly every member of old Hook and Ladder No. 1 saved one or more lives, and the next day the papers teemed with accounts of deeds of daring among the brave fellows. The new chief of the fire department worked like a beaver and showed that he was competent in every respect to hold the position to which he had been elected.

A few days after the fire Mrs. Bosworth sent for Walter and said:

"I am going to build a fire-proof hotel on the site of the old one, if the owners of the lot will sell at a reasonable figure. I am tired of being burnt out so often. See the owners at once and let me know if they will sell."

Two hours later Walter reported to her that she could have the lot at a certain figure.

She immediately wrote a check for the amount and gave it to him, saying:

"Secure it at once and set workmen to clearing away the debris. Then get the best architects to draw plans for a first-class, fire-proof hotel with 250 rooms. Probably you won't have to risk your life the third time to save mine if I get into a fire-proof house like that."

"You can rest assured that I do not consider it a task to risk my life to save yours," he replied. "You have done enough for me and mine to warrant me in laying down my life for you whenever the necessity for doing so shall come."

"I don't want such a necessity to come, Walter," she replied. "It's the very thing I am trying to provide against. I want you to live for me. You understand?"

"Ah! I shall be a happy man in living to serve you," he said. "What do we not owe to your generosity?"

"Not half as much as I owe to you," said she. "The wealth of the world cannot pay for a life."

"I cannot deny that, and yet I—"

"Walter, go and secure the site of the hotel and then come back to me," she said, interrupting him.

He went away to attend to the business, for he was now her sole business agent, and never failed to be prompt in even the most minute matter.

He called on her the next day with the title deeds to the land, and then she gave orders for an architect to draw plans to be submitted.

In a week's time a plan had been adopted and work commenced.

The people of Mill Dale were astonished at the rapidity with which the work progressed.

In six month's time the big hotel was finished, furnished, and formally opened as the

: : : : : : :  
: : "WALTER BAYNE HOUSE." :  
: : : : : : :

"You are honoring me too much. People will talk about it, you know."

"And what will they say?"

"They will say that I, as your business agent, had it done, and that you, because I traded on your gratitude, yielded to the idea."

She looked him in the face and said:

"Walter Bayne, you once said that I could not ask of you anything you would refuse, did you not?"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied, "and I repeat it again."

"Then I am going to ask you to make me your wife. Will you refuse me that request?"

"No," said Walter, almost out of breath with joy. "I have wished it a thousand times, but hadn't the courage to propose."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CONCLUSION.

When Walter Bayne returned home that evening he was so happy and light-hearted that he felt as if he were walking on air. He looked back five years to the time when he was a penniless youth of sixteen, with an invalid father, a mother and little sister to take care of.

He thought of the many perils through which he passed and the lives he had saved, and then looked at his present surroundings.

His father, as superintendent of the largest mill in the city, was making money fast, and his mother was happy, and moving in the very best circles of society.

To cap all that, he was now engaged to the richest woman in the State, and as her husband would be looked up to as the richest man in Mill Dale. She was the only individual who was the exclusive owner of a big mill and was now the owner of the finest hotel in the place, besides whole blocks of other houses.

No wonder he felt like one in a dream as he wended his way home that evening. But his happiness was not of a mercenary character, for he had grown to love the beautiful widow with the deepest devotion of his heart.

True, she was about eight years older than he, but neither of them thought anything of that.

As for the widow, she had loved him from the day she gave him charge of her estate, and had long promised herself that if he did not ask her to be his wife, she would ask him to be her husband, and at last, when leap year came, she did so, fully satisfied that he loved her, but was afraid to propose to her.

"Mother," he said that evening as they sat in their little parlor, "what do you think the name of the new hotel is? They put up the sign to-day."

"I am sure I don't know," she replied. "What is it?"

"They call it the Walter Bayne House."

"Goodness sakes alive!" exclaimed the proud mother. "When will that woman's gratitude stop?"

"That's what I have often asked myself," he remarked. "I tried to dissuade her from doing that, but she laughed at me. She is going to live there, too, and call herself Mrs. Walter Bayne!"

"Good Lord!" gasped Mrs. Bayne. "Is the woman gone crazy?"

"Oh, no! I am going to live there, too—after we are married."

"Married!"

"Yes, mother. I am going to marry the Widow Bosworth."

His parents were dumfounded at the news, and then they rejoiced and congratulated him.

"Don't say a word about it yet awhile," he said, "for we are going to wait till her birthday comes round in December."

It was a big secret for them to keep, but they kept it.

In the meantime Walter remained a member of Hook and Ladder No. 1, and his popularity was such that when the firemen nominated him as their candidate for mayor of Mill Dale he was elected over the candidates of both the old political parties.

Everybody was his friend, and when he was sworn in as mayor the firemen paraded the streets, and the mill hands all took a holiday.

Soon after his inauguration as mayor the engagement between himself and the rich widow was made public.

It created a stir in the highest circles of the city, and great preparations for the event were made.

They were to be married in church, and the members of Hook and Ladder No. 1 begged that they be allowed to make the truck a chariot of roses and pull them to and from the church whilst seated upon it.

The widow granted the request, and with four-and-twenty little bridesmaids surrounding the bridal coach, the brave firemen dragged them to the church door, escorted by all the other firemen in the city in full uniform.

Every shop in the city was closed, and the operatives turned out to do honor to the gallant fireman and his bride. They were cheered from the beginning to the end of the line of the procession.

When the ceremony was over at the church, the happy couple were escorted back to the hotel amid the ringing of bells, the cheers of the firemen and the waving of handkerchiefs all along the route.

The firemen sat down to a sumptuous feast in the great dining-room of the hotel, where they ate and drank the health and happiness of the couple.

Thus ends the story of the daring young fireman, who began battling with flames at the age of sixteen years, and his career attests the truth of the saying, that "Courage and truth ever reward those who possess them."

### THE END.

Read "ONE HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE HOUSETOPOPS; or, THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD CHURCH STEEPLE" (by Allyn Draper), which will be the next number (520) of "Pluck and Luck."

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## THINGS OF INTEREST.

The chipmunk is not usually considered much of a songbird, but according to Ernest Thompson Seton he is quite a success in a vocal role. In Manitoba the chipmunk comes above ground about the first or second week of April, says Mr. Seton in *Success*. Mounted on some log or root, it reiterates a loud, chirpy "Chuck-chuck-chuck," to the spring salute. They are active from this time of the year on, and their sunny morning chorus is not by any means confined to that original outburst. On April 29, 1905, at Cos Cob, I heard a chipmunk in full song. He kept it up for eleven minutes without ceasing, and uttered 130 chirps to the minute. He got no reply, though he worked very hard and seemed tired toward the last. On May 28, 1905, at Cos Cob, I heard a chipmunk singing. He kept it up for three minutes, uttering three chirps to the second.

Quite a sensation has been caused in Austrian fashionable society by a "freak" dinner given at the Bristol Hotel, Vienna. The hostess was an American woman of great wealth. In the center of the dining-table, which was eighteen feet in diameter and draped with damask to the floor, swam in a huge basin all manner of fish, and even small crocodiles, or creatures resembling them. A female figure on a bronze pedestal poured from a ewer a perpetual stream into the basin. Roses in full bloom were placed around the table, and from each of them hung snakes, made of Parma violets, writhing over the cloth. The jaws and eyes of the reptiles were blazing with ruby electric lights. Hidden among the banks of which surrounded the fruit dishes were tiny wooden cages containing trained Hartz canaries, which kept up an eager contest of song. The evening finished with a Tombola, and the winners received a crystal glass decked with ribbons, from which peeped a pink-eyed white mouse.

Agents of the Smithsonian Institution who have been spending several weeks in the north are reported to have made important anthropological discoveries in a series of caves not far from Sitka, from which upward of twenty perfectly preserved mummies of the tribes originally inhabiting that part of Alaska have been removed. The caves are situated about eleven miles from the territorial capital, and appear to have been devoted almost exclusively to purposes of sepulture. It is estimated that they contain some hundreds of mummies and thousands of skulls, together with various utensils and implements contemporaneous with

the dead. The caves were accidentally located about three years ago by Andrew Pihl of Sitka, who brought one of the mummies to that place and exhibited it, at the same time communicating news of his find to scientists in Washington. The remains uncovered are said to support the theory of a Japanese origin of the Alaskan tribe.

How many of the fair wearers of sealskin know how this fur is prepared? In the skin of a dog or cat it will be noticed that at the roots of the longer, coarser hair there are fine, short hairs, called "under fur." In most animals these hairs are so few that they are usually overlooked. Not so with sealskin. The skin after going through various processes to cleanse it of grease, etc., is stretched flat with the flesh side uppermost. A flat knife is then passed over it, thinning the skin considerably. In doing this it loosens the roots of the longer hairs, which are more deeply embedded than those of the under fur. The rough hairs are thus got rid of without injury to the softer fur. Next the pelt passes through operations which soften and preserve it. Then comes the dyeing, by which the uniform tint so generally admired is obtained. And now the fur is ready for making up.

## OUR COMIC COLUMN.

"Professor," said a senior, trying to be pathetic at parting, "I am indebted to you for all I know." "Pray don't mention such a trifle," was the reply.

"It's a pretty safe bet that old Kraftman is beginning to make his pile now." "How do you know?" "Oh, he's beginning to go around now growling about how much happier a man is when he's poor."

The routine of the Criminal Court proceedings had been marked by only one unusual incident, and that was the alacrity with which a certain hard character was sentenced for sixty days to the workhouse. "Judge," observed the district attorney at the close of the dreary session, "you seemed to relish the privilege of sending that man to the workhouse. Did his case impress you?" "Now, look here," whispered the judge, as he beckoned the attorney aside, "that man is a worthless fellow. Always drunk and never contributes a cent to the support of his wife, who is a most deserving woman. I feel sorry for her, and whenever he is in prison she comes to our home and assists my wife in the kitchen. And," chuckled the judge, as he tapped the attorney's shoulder cheerfully, "she does know how to bake apple pie."

"I was counsel for a railway company in the West," says a prominent New York lawyer, "in whose employ a section hand had been killed by an express train. His widow, of course, sued for damages. The principal witness swore positively that the locomotive whistle had not sounded until after the entire train had passed over his departed friend. 'You admit that the whistle blew?' I sternly demanded of the witness. 'Oh, yes, it blew.' 'Now,' I added impressively, 'if that whistle sounded in time to give Morgan warning the fact would be in favor of the company, wouldn't it?' 'I suppose so,' said the witness. 'Very well. Now, for what earthly purpose would the engineer blow his whistle after the man had been struck?' 'I presume,' replied the witness, with great deliberation, 'that the whistle was for the next man on the track.'"

## JACK'S LESSON

By KIT CLYDE.

"I wish I were dead!" exclaimed Jack Porter, in an irritable tone.

"Why so?" asked a cheery voice beside him.

"Because I don't see any use in living if I've got to dig in the mines all my days. Some people seem to have all the good times in this world, and others nothing but hard work. There's Ruff Hare, a lazy, stupid fellow at school, going off to travel, with plenty of money to spend, and all the airs of a grand gentleman, just because his father had the luck to buy a bit of land with a rich vein of coal in it; while here am I toiling and moiling in the dirt from morning till night, when I might be something or somebody if I had a chance——"

"And were selfish enough to leave your mother and sister take care of themselves. Well, now, suppose like me you were blind, and had not seen the sun for twenty years, and could earn only enough to keep soul and body together by slate-picking in the Breaker?"

"I couldn't endure such a life; and I don't see how you can always be so cheerful and contented," replied Porter, looking at his companion half pitifully, half contemptuously, as one lacking the fine nature to feel privations as he did.

"I hear the birds sing and feel the warm sunshine this bright May morning. I'm not as bad off as poor Jake Fossett, a helpless cripple, on his back, with no end of pains and aches," replied the blind man, in the same cheerful voice.

Here the two parted to go to their separate tasks; but Porter went to work with his heart full of discontent.

There were several men digging in the vein of coal beside him.

After an hour or two had passed, they all noticed a rumbling and cracking which they thought came from the roof, and fearing that it would fall, they began examining it to see if any portion appeared disturbed.

But the noise soon became so violent that they ran into the heading.

They had scarcely reached it when the floor of the vein heaved up, opened, and a volume of gas rushed out, filling the whole place.

Porter darted into a passage leading inwards from the breast.

The other men ran forward, the gas ignited, and a terrible explosion shook the mine.

Porter being behind the explosion, which always takes an outward course, was stunned only and slightly injured by being dashed against the coal.

When he recovered from the shock, he was in total darkness, but on relighting his lamp he discovered that a dense wall of rock and coal had been thrown down and effectually barred his escape to the shaft.

Still, he felt quite sure he could find another passage out, and turning up the tunnel, he walked on for a long distance, over shattered wood-work and through narrow stopes, hoping at every turn to see light ahead.

To his unspeakable horror, the tunnel he had been following led him to a large cell, from which there was no advance.

He turned and began painfully to retrace his steps, thinking he might possibly have overlooked some other passage, but no other passage was to be found, and the fearful conviction was forced upon him that he was buried alive.

What would he give now for a gleam of sunlight, one sound of a living voice to break that death-like silence!

The air was purer in the farthest cell, and there at last in

utter despair he threw himself down, praying that Heaven in mercy would let the end come soon.

And unconsciousness did come, but it was the quiet sleep that exhausted nature demanded.

But the waking came, and the reality of his position burst upon him with renewed horror.

He found his pick was still at his side, and he resolved to grope his way back to the scene of explosion and work at the wall till he died or escaped; anything was better than inaction.

As he turned to the wall and was feeling for the tunnel, in creeping round a projecting rock he saw a faint gleam of light that seemed at first like a glow-worm.

He put his finger over the spot, and felt cold air coming against it.

Instantly, yet cautiously, he struck the spot with his pick, and after a few blows more light was admitted.

Hope now nerved him, and scarcely stopping to take breath, he struck at the rock till the opening was so large he could pass through his hand and feel the warm sunshine upon it.

With a shout of joy he began to pick the earth again, but his random blows brought down more coal than he meant should come.

He saw that all danger was not yet over, and that he must use caution where he struck, or he might yet lose his chance of escape.

Slowly now, hour after hour, he toiled, bracing up the opening he was making as he worked, till it was large enough for him to pull himself through.

As his head emerged to daylight, he looked eagerly about him to see where he was.

To his surprise, he found himself scarcely halfway up a deep hole, where the mine had caved in.

He remembered the spot, and wondered how he could reach the top, for there was nothing on the sides of the hole that he could cling to to draw himself out of it.

Yet, to feel the warm sunshine, see the green trees, and hear the birds, was a pleasure in itself he had not expected to enjoy again, and some one would surely pass the opening ere long.

After what seemed very weary watching, he heard a voice whistling in response to the song of the birds, and he shouted aloud for help.

"What's the matter here?" shouted some one, and looking up, Porter saw his blind friend.

"Don't come too close to this cave-in!" he cried, to caution him; "but go tell some men to bring a rope and haul me up. I've been buried alive in the mines, but have dug myself out so far, and now want help."

"Why, if it ain't Jack Porter! We thought you were killed in the explosion yesterday, with all the other poor fellows that were working in that vein. Any one else with you?"

"No. I jumped behind the fall, and I suppose that saved me. But you don't mean to say that it happened yesterday? Why, it seems as if I had been buried for months."

"Yesterday morning at nine o'clock it burst like an earthquake. And they are digging down there now, while your mother and sister are waiting at the shaft, with the other poor women, to see your scorched body brought up, as all that's left of you. But I reckon you're glad you ain't dead, after all. Have you found out yet that there's anything worth living for?"

"I don't think you'll hear me complaining again. If I get out of this, I mean hereafter to work aboveground under the light of the sun. But please get the men, and help me out."

"Well, well, my keen hearing served you a good turn; now I'll send those who have eyes to serve you another."

## THE ORDEAL

Soon after the gold-fever broke out I went to California.

I first tried my luck at digging gold myself, but soon tired of that; and, believing I could make money faster and with less labor, I opened a kind of grocery and provision store.

My store being the head-quarters of that locality for whisky and provisions, I was brought into contact with nearly every specimen of gentlemen, laborers, mountaineers, gamblers, thieves and assassins. Of course I had a chance to study all sorts of faces to my heart's content.

I wanted to get hold of what is termed a character—one that would really puzzle you to tell what to think of him.

Among the many such a one I at length found.

At a casual glance there was nothing to distinguish him from the herd. He came in quiet, unobtrusively purchased a quantity of flour, pork, and tea, paid for the same in gold-dust, and went out about his business.

He was quiet, had nothing to say, except about the business he came on, got what he wanted, paid for what he got, and generally retired with some civility.

One day, I scarcely know how, I touched upon the general superstitions of mankind, and to my surprise I saw that he was interested.

His eye changed expression, and brightened, and emitted a strange and peculiar gleam. I now bethought me that I had never seen one like it, and I looked in at that opening and saw that the soul of that man was a dark one.

A nameless fear came over me. I felt an internal shudder.

No wonder I had not been able to read him before; the man had been wearing an impenetrable mask.

He was interested in superstitions; he was superstitious himself.

I had accidentally thrown him off his guard and read his soul.

Fear only made him so; and in one of his iron nature fear could only arise from the self-convicted knowledge of a past wicked deed.

The man was even then a criminal.

One dark night I was startled from my sleep by wild, prolonged shrieks, and cries of:

"Murder! murder! Help! help!"

I jumped up, seized my revolvers, and darted out into the open air.

The cries and screams still continued, coming from a point on the bend of the river about a hundred rods below.

In a minute I was joined by five others, all well armed, and together we ran as hard as we could to the place from which the alarm proceeded.

When we arrived there at least thirty men were collected in and around the tent of the dark man I have been describing, and he himself it was who had given the alarm.

His partner and companion had been murdered and robbed, and he himself had been slightly cut across the face and gashed on the left arm, and he was all excitement, lamenting his dearest friend, and vowing vengeance against the assassin.

It was some time before we could get at the particulars, and then we learned that both had been sleeping side by side, when an unknown robber had crawled under the light canvas, stabbed one to the heart, and taken a large bag of gold from under his head.

With this he was escaping, when the present narrator awoke and seized him, and received the wounds which had compelled him to relinquish his hold.

Lights were brought, and there, sure enough, was the sanguinary confirmation of all that had been related. I shall make no attempt to portray the intense excitement, the wild rage and consternation which this daring murder occasioned.

The murdered young man was as decently buried as surrounding circumstances would permit, and his companion—my superstitious friend—grew more moody with grief, refused to work his "lead" any more, and proposed selling off his rocker and tools and quitting the country altogether.

On the second afternoon following the tragedy almost every individual in the vicinity—the friend of the murdered man among the rest—assembled at my store at my particular request.

I had told them I had something to communicate concerning the foul deed, and I thought it not unlikely I should give them some clew to the assassin.

When all had collected and arranged themselves, as I had directed, in a semi-circle before my door, I came forward, holding in my hand an egg.

Then I made them a short speech on the various superstitions of mankind, which I contended had their origin in mysterious facts; and among other things I mentioned how the ghosts of their victims would often haunt the murderers, compelling them to reveal their crimes, and how it had been asserted that if the guilty wretch should place his hand upon the body of the man he had secretly slain the wound would bleed afresh.

"And now, gentlemen," I continued, "I hold in my hand as sure a test as any I have named. This simple egg, so fair to the view, contains the murderer's secret. Let him but take it in his hand and the frail shell will crumble to pieces, and show to all that it is filled with the blood of his victim. The murderer of the young man we buried yesterday may be among us; but only the guilty need fear the trial—the innocent will surely pass the ordeal unharmed."

As I said this I fixed my gaze upon my dark visitor, my suspected man.

I never saw a more wretched and ghastly countenance, nor a greater struggle in any living being to keep a calm and unmoved exterior.

The egg began its round.

Some took it gravely, some lightly, some turned slightly pale, and some laughed outright.

But on it went and came nearer to the man for whom it was intended.

I could see that he was trembling—that his very lips were getting white.

"It is your turn now!" I said, at length, in a cold, stern tone.

He made one despairing effort to be calm, gulped his breath like one choking, and seized the fatal egg with trembling hands.

The next moment it was crushed in atoms, and his hands were wet and stained as if with human gore.

A wild yell burst from the crowd.

A despairing shriek came from the lips of the guilty wretch, and falling rather than sinking down upon his knees, he cried out

"God of mercy, forgive me! I did kill him! I did kill him! for his gold—his gold—his gold! Oh, Heaven, forgive me!"

"And how many before him?" demanded I.

"Three—three! Oh, mercy, forgive me!"

There was another wild yell, or rather howl, of fury—a rush like wolves upon their prey—and the poor wretch was seized, almost torn limb from limb, and dragged furiously away.

In less than ten minutes from his confession he was dangling from a neighboring tree—swinging by his neck.

So died the murderer.

I will only add that, believing him guilty, I had previously prepared the egg expecting to see him crush it through his superstitious fears of a supernatural discovery.

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